Golf Open Championship

Masterly O'Meara proves his point

David Davies at Royal Birkdale

UNTIL this year Mark O'Meara had played in 56 major championships without a victory. Now he has now won two of the last three. Last Sunday he secured the Open Championship, beating the unknown American Brian Watts over a four-hole aggregate play-off to add to the US Masters title he won at Augusta in April.

The two men had ended tied on level-par 280, but O'Meara held the upper hand from the first play-off hole, the 15th, which he birdied, and by completing the four extra holes in 17 shots, one under par, he won by two strokes from his fellow American.

O'Meara earned $480,000, together with confirmation that Augusta was no fluke, while Watts, who plays the Japanese tour and has amassed some 489,195,325 yen ($3.5 million) in his career but never a title of note, had the satisfaction that at least no one beat him over 72 holes.

The avuncular O'Meara played the percentages throughout and, when he had to, holed the putts. After both men had failed to reach the green at the 15th in the play-off, it was O'Meara who chipped to 6ft and holed whereas Watts, who approached to 3ft, missed.

It was the decisive moment. Watts made a mess of the 17th and though he escaped with a par, holing from 11ft, his game had gone and O'Meara's routine par at the last brought him the title. "Of all the championships in the world," he said, "this is the most special one there is. It's the worldwide championship."

O'Meara must have thought he was already home and dry after Watts had hit his drive to the 18th in regular play. The shot finished in punitive rough and Watts did well to get it as far as he did. But again, after that second shot, O'Meara must have been mentally rehearsing his speech, for the ball finished on the downslope of a greenside bunker, from where it would have been easier to deposit it in the clubhouse bar than get it on the green.

But Watts, one foot outside the bunker, managed to deliver the sharply descending blow with an open-faced wedge that was necessary, without taking a bucketful of sand, and to mounting astonishment the ball trickled to within a foot. It was as good a shot in the circumstances as anyone could have played, and deserved to take the game into extra-time.

Watts, who had led the field since the second, blustery day, had wavered over the closing nine, missing the short 12th by miles and needing a miracle shot out of rough to gain the green and drop only one shot; he did not birdie the long 15th and would not have birdied the long 17th but for a 15ft putt. But that sand shot made amends for all that had gone before.



From green to claret . . . Mark O'Meara celebrates his Open victory three months after his triumph in the US Masters PHOTO: TOM JENKINS

O'Meara had six birdies in his 68 — and four bogeys. When he failed to hit from 6ft for a birdie at the 15th and missed the green at the 16th to drop a shot, it looked as though a major title was slipping away. But, as Watts was to do later, he holed from 15ft at the 17th for a workaday birdie, and that was enough for the play-off.

The 18th hole was surrounded by drama, and Tiger Woods, inevitably, and England's latest sporting sensation Justin Rose, pleasurably, provided chunks of it. Having lurked without much intent all day, Woods two-putted the long 15th for a birdie, chipped in for another at the 17th and then holed from 35ft at the last to finish only one over the card. He delivered a series of trademark right uppercuts as the crowd informed the rest of Lancashire that the young American had nearly done it again.

Woods is a singular man in many ways but the most tiresome form of his uniqueness is the posse of officials, minders and marshals who ride shotgun as he makes his way around the course. A couple of Birkdale's finest last Sunday actually affected the appearance and manner of presidential bodyguards, complete with shades on a grey, drizzly day.

Rose arrived early for his final round, more than two hours before his tee-time of 2.15pm. He had been so much in demand off the course that practice had been neglected and so he spent an hour on the putting green, lunched at 12.15 and spent from 1pm to 1.45 on the range, followed by some chipping and more putting before going to the 1st tee.

Throughout he was offered congratulations by spectators and players, and even Sergio Garcia, the young Spaniard who won the Amateur Championship recently and was Rose's only possible rival for the leading amateur's silver medal, wished him well.

Earlier, the best amateur Open finisher of recent years, Peter McEvoy, who came 17th at Lytham in 1979, had said: "I want him to win and that's the absolute truth. But he's going to finish about 14th. I hope he finishes 18th." Rose finished joint fourth, a wonderful wonderful effort.

Cryptic crossword by Plodge

Across

9 Order trainee to turn east? (9)
10 Not owing to quality of influence (5)
11 Built, having changed hands, for the chosen (7)
12 See 17 down
13 Everyone grew pale without having lost blood (4)
14 Thought too little of faults? Darned true! (10)
16 Leading herb garden gave 1 a refuge (7)
17 Phoebus: laid-back timekeeper? (7)
19 Alias concocted to have a go in an orgy (10)
22 Scottish 16's circle bar (4)
24 Tasteless, pointless, wine — the drop I had (7)
25 Moral from methodical Ministry of Defence withdrawal (7)
26 The germ to give Strangelove a turn? (5)
27 Forced French girl to back member in hoax (9)

Down

1 Church leader? Still, he's to trouble alternative man who fancies olive oil, they say (6,3,6)
2 Awfully sincere, left in making a gag (8)
3 Articulate county grannies? (5)
4 Logger lost record entry of forest cultivator (8)
5 Bottle, sounding brass? (6)
6 Nautilus was one to remain poor after handout (9)
7 Turn one's mind to having a little puff? (6)
8 Hostess (of 16 View), sad and easily led astray (7,8)
15 Depraved? (Wow! — awfully rude!) Point taken (9)
17,12 Labour members sit out winter in France? "I'm gobsmacked!" cried 1 (6,2,7)
18 Endless climbers scratch lice — how brainless (8)
20 "It's YOU!" (What a load of flies!) (6)
21 Shanghai cad? But always (6)
23 Heard from a bird going for a song, say (5)

Last week's solution

CUSTARDTART · INSWING · ANTWERP · ELOPEMENT · BITER · POSH · ASCENDANCY · GOFORASONG · BABY · NAIRN · AUNTSALLY · ELECTED · TEACAKE · SPERMOPHYTS

Rose blooms under spotlight

LAST year, when Justin Rose was only 16, he became the youngest golfer ever to play in the Walker Cup, *writes David Davies.*

He was Great Britain and Ireland's best player in that competition, taking two points out of four and remaining as calm and composed there as he has here, while at the same time opening the world's eye to his tremendous talent.

Rose, at Royal Birkdale, captivated not only the 120,000 or so who crowded these lovely links during the four days of play but millions of television viewers worldwide. They have marvelled at a boy who has played like a man.

Despite the fact that he will not be able to vote until the end of this month, this week has been Rose's coming of age. No matter what is to come, Royal Birkdale 1998 will be etched in his memory in much the same way as Royal Birkdale 1976 has been in the mind of Severiano Ballesteros, when the 19-year-old Spaniard announced himself by finishing second to Johnny Miller.

Ballesteros led that Open at various stages, just as Rose jointly led during the third round; invaluable exposure to the pressures not just of competition but of dealing with the demands made by the media, sponsors and officials.



Rose: great expectations

Rose, at an age when most young men find it difficult to meet an adult's eye, has faced the world's press with complete equanimity. Asked after the third round if he had realised he had been leading the Open Championship at one stage, he admitted that he had — and that he liked it. "It felt great. I wasn't uncomfortable with that situation," he said.

Rose has played his last round as an amateur, and the expectations of him as a professional will be high. Among those who knew him best during his days as an amateur was the man who was his captain during his England career, Peter McEvoy, twice the Amateur champion. McEvoy said: "He'll be the one. This is the coming of the golfing Messiah, the next Faldo."

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The Washington Post · Le Monde

Mass turnout for Cambodian poll

Nick Cumming-Bruce in Phnom Penh

VOTERS in Cambodia vindicated international support for controversial parliamentary elections by voting in large numbers and mostly peacefully last weekend.

How free and fair the ballot has been remains the key issue for some 500 international observers from 23 countries, after a month-long campaign marred by intimidation and overshadowed by the bloody coup a year ago, when Hun Sen toppled his co-prime minister, Prince Norodom Ranariddh.

Voters turned out in force throughout the country last Sunday to participate enthusiastically in the first general election since that organised by a United Nations peacekeeping operation in 1993.

Ten people died in a Khmer Rouge attack in Anlong Veng, the guerrillas' last big jungle base in the remote north. But the isolated incident was not expected to have a bearing on the outcome of the polls.

The international community said on Tuesday that the election was sufficiently free and fair to reflect the will of the people, but the opposition complained of unfair vote counting.

Analysts and party officials said the ruling Cambodian People's party (CCP) of the current leader Hun Sen appeared to be pulling ahead as the vote was counted.

Prince Ranariddh's Funcinpec party was second, and the party of the former finance minister, Sam Rainsy, third, according to early projections.

During the voting a member of the Cambodian poll-monitoring organisation, Comfrel, said: "The biggest problem is crowd control, which is not the problem we expected."

At one polling station in Phnom Penh voters left the building via windows to escape a crush at the front. At another polling station people were swarming across desks to cast their votes.

"They are so happy. In my neighbourhood they weren't scared," the Comfrel director, Kuol Panha, said. "I believe this is a very proud people who wanted to vote."

But an undercurrent of fear prompted most shops in Phnom Penh to remain shut on election day. Most people were unwilling to reveal how they had voted. "We're all afraid," Bun Ly, a farmer aged 40, said. "We don't dare to speak out."

Others spoke of a wish for peace, which was as close as most would come to voicing their opposition to Hun Sen's regime. Several villagers said such developments as there had been had benefited the rich more than the poor. "If Hun Sen wins the election, in five years Cambodia will be finished," Heng Kim Leng, a food vendor, said.

Such sentiments illustrate the perception during the campaign that Prince Ranariddh and the outspoken government critic Sam Rainsy had mounted a serious challenge for the leadership

Almost 5.4 million people were eligible to vote for 39 parties fighting for 122 national assembly seats. Election officials said in many areas 70-80 per cent of eligible voters had cast their ballots early.

Political violence has been less in evidence than in the run-up to Cambodia's last election in 1993, but campaigning was tarnished by relentless intimidation of opposition workers and frightening voters into backing Hun Sen's party.



A Chinese family salvage belongings from their flooded home in Wuhan PHOTOGRAPH: REUTERS

China floods claim more than 1,000 lives

John Gittings

THE homes and lives of millions of Chinese are threatened by the worst floods on the Yangtze river for more than 40 years, authorities in Beijing warned last week. The Three Gorges dam project, now at a critical stage of construction, has been at risk, and almost all river traffic has been halted.

Chinese authorities bracing for more floods declared a state of emergency in two provinces as the nationwide death toll from natural disasters this summer passed the 2,500 mark.

Direct economic losses from natural disasters now stand at $18.4 billion, the ministry of civil affairs said, equivalent to more than 2 per cent of last year's gross domestic product.

President Jiang Zemin has intervened personally to order reinforcement of river dikes in the central Yangtze region which could collapse at any moment. The official press complains that warnings of disaster were ignored, and that corrupt local officials misappropriated flood control funds.

The most recent government report on flood casualties, issued late last week, said that 145 people had died in Hubei, Hunan and Jiangxi provinces, bringing the summer flooding death toll to more than 1,270.

One natural disaster has followed another. Last week hurricane-force winds swept through the Three Gorges. The next day 38cm of rain fell on Wuhan city in 12 hours.

A coffer dam, built to protect the Three Gorges construction upstream, has been severely tested. Officials say it could be in greater risk if the next flood surge is even slightly higher.

Explanations for the spate of floods throughout China range from global warming to the effects of El Niño. But Chinese experts believe the real causes are local deforestation, uncontrolled building and neglect of flood control.

Washington Post, page 15

Britain sets out to end asylum seekers' despair

Alan Travis

MORE than 30,000 asylum seekers and their families are to be allowed to stay in Britain under a limited amnesty unveiled this week by the Home Secretary, Jack Straw, in a one-off effort to cut the backlog of 76,000 cases.

But this exemption is to be accompanied by a plan to disperse the remaining asylum seekers to approved hostels and bed-and-breakfast accommodation throughout Britain while their cases are heard.

Applicants, who are banned from working, will not receive welfare benefits while their cases are decided. Instead they will mostly get help "in kind" such as food vouchers. Cash payments will be kept to a minimum. "What the genuine asylum seeker needs is food and shelter, not a Giro cheque," Mr Straw said on Monday.

The scheme, first floated by the Tory Westminster council, is designed to relieve the burden on London local authorities. Extra Home Office officials are to be drafted to Manchester, Glasgow, Leeds and Bristol to oversee the dispersal.

In a system similar to that used in Germany, hostel accommodation will be provided directly by a Home Office agency, and asylum seekers will have no choice about where they are sent. Private landlords, housing associations and voluntary organisations will be invited to provide the accommodation, relieving local authorities of the burden.

The decision not to restore welfare benefits for asylum seekers awaiting the outcome of their cases comes despite fierce Labour protests that such action was inhumane when the Conservative minister Peter Lilley axed the payments four years ago.

Mr Straw said he hoped to clear the backlog and, by April 2001, produce initial decisions on asylum cases within two months. A further £120 million ($200 million) is to be spent cleaning up the system, officially described as a shambles.

Ministers insisted that they were not declaring an amnesty for the 30,000 who have been waiting longer than 18 months for an initial decision on their cases.

For some 10,000 cases who have been waiting more than five years for an initial decision, the delay alone will be regarded as sufficient to give them indefinite leave to remain in Britain. Many of them have been waiting since before 1993 because their applications were put to one side as part of a previous attempt to clear the backlog.

At least 20,000 more who first applied between July 1993 and December 1995 will be allowed to stay for at least a further four years if they have family ties or have "given service to the community".

Other proposals in the White Paper on Asylum and Immigration include:

- Asking overseas visitors who need visas for close family events to post a financial bond, returnable when they leave the country
- Introducing statutory regulation to curb unscrupulous immigration advisers and a legal code of practice on checks to prevent illegal working
- Abolishing the "White List" of countries, such as Pakistan and Romania, from where it is presumed all asylum applications are bogus
- Extending sweeping police powers to immigration officers, including greater use of fingerprinting
- Giving asylum seekers five days instead of 25 days to make representations after their first interview.

Comment, page 12

Austria	AS30	Malta	50c
Belgium	BF80	Netherlands	G 5
Denmark	DK17	Norway	NK 16
Finland	FM 10	Portugal	E300
France	FF 14	Saudi Arabia	SR 8.50
Germany	DM 4	Spain	P 300
Greece	DR 500	Sweden	SK 19
Italy	L 3,500	Switzerland	SF 3.80

Pauline Hanson's appeal to neglected Australians

THERE have been numerous letters and articles in the Guardian Weekly in recent weeks regarding (in Tim Fischer's words) "the political earthquake in Queensland".

As a battling trucker and contractor (who incredibly subscribes to the Guardian Weekly) I am beginning to find tiresome and irrelevant the views and opinions of people such as Martin Woollacott and his mates; people he describes as "educated Australians of the academic, professional and business élite".

As the One Nation phenomenon has grown, the Australian public has been treated to some amazing and revealing behaviour from the media, the politicians and the PC intelligentsia. Early on there was virtually a blanket ban, self-imposed, on any reporting of the topic. The only publication revealing Pauline Hanson's speeches or questions in the House was Hansard. She didn't go away, and a vicious campaign of vilification and exaggeration followed.

For nearly two years this woman has endured the most stressful campaign of lies, sarcasm and insult ever heaped on a politician. She consistently stood up to articulate journalists whose attempts to patronise and insult her have utterly failed. Her courage and tenacity combined with her simple "why not" questions have endeared her to the battlers.

And they are not, as the media now attempts to imply, all from the bush. Australians are cynical about all leaders now, whether they are in politics, unions or other fields.

Australians have watched successive governments waste billions trying to make Aborigines perform like other Australians. The money has been stolen, wasted and lost with nil effect, and there are still no indigenous doctors, scientists or engineers. Instead we have an army of slightly brown spongers portraying the Aboriginal people as pathetic victims of history. Hanson at least pays them the compliment of telling them they are no more and no less than other Australians and should be treated equally.

In recent weeks we have been treated to lectures on racism from the Indonesian foreign minister whose own ethnic Chinese were being systematically raped and plundered as he spoke. Even the Japanese saw fit to join the chorus. What a bloody cheek from a nation who can't even grant citizenship to fourth-generation Japanese-born Koreans.

Meanwhile Asian Australians continue to go about their business in Australia where they have nothing to fear except their own silly leaders, who form high-profile voting blocs to try to influence government against One Nation. In doing so they dig themselves lower in public opinion.

John F Bent,
Yeppoon, Queensland, Australia

FIRST let me establish my credentials: mid-70s, English by birth, Australian by choice, PhD London, philosophically close to the Quakers and a life-long committed socialist — yet I voted One Nation in the Queensland election.

I am clearly not one of the racist, red-necked, guntoting, Abo-bashing bushies portrayed as the typical supporter of Pauline Hanson, nor are the majority of One Nation voters. At least half of them are town dwellers, as are the electors of Ipswich (a safe working-class Labor seat) who originally returned Mrs Hanson to Parliament in 1996.

The political spectrum is not linear, it is circular. Those of us on the far left rub shoulders with those on the far right, particularly the rural far right. Indeed the National party is a Blair-like remake of the former Country party, which was frequently described as rural socialist.

It is from this segment of the political remote that One Nation draws most of its adherents. The people in this segment are typically workers, at all levels, in the productive industries, both primary and secondary. They are well aware that it is their labour that produces the nation's wealth, and they are justifiably resentful when they see it inequitably distributed and manipulated for political and sectional interests.

In return for their contribution to the commonwealth they expect the government to protect them, in a sort of socio-economic feudalism, from exploitation of either domestic or foreign origin. To date, both Labor and coalition governments have demonstrably failed them in this respect, but now they have what has so far been lacking — an election alternative and a glimmer of hope.

I do not expect Mrs Hanson to become Australia's first female prime minister, but I do hope her party will purge the body politic of double standards and political correctness and lead the major parties, particularly the Labor party and the National party, to address the concerns of their national constituencies. The Liberal party is beyond redemption.

J W Ridge,
Stanthorpe, Queensland, Australia

PAULINE Hanson asks: "What have Aboriginal Australians ever done for white Australians?" Answer: given them a glorious wide, brown land in which to settle. If Kooris in the 18th century had had the sort of migration policy envisaged by One Nation there wouldn't be one white face on the continent.

Ms Hanson now wants to take away Aborigines' right to vote. Shades of Nazi Europe, where Jews and Gypsies (many of whom had lived there for hundreds of years) lost first their right to vote, then their property, and finally their lives.

It is time to nail the bull to the door and call Ms Hanson, her advisers and One Nation policies exactly what they are: bigoted, racist, fascist and extremely dangerous to any continuance of tolerance and democracy in this country.

Jimmie Storey,
President, Romani Association of Australia,
Copmanhurst, NSW, Australia

Cambodian realities

WHEN Jenny Pearson states (July 26) the political preference of the "many who live and work" in Cambodia, I presume she is referring to the foreign community. This is generally a small group of short-term migrant workers who tend to gather in places completely isolated from Cambodians, excepting a bartender.

Six years of listening to the views and hopes of Cambodians, suggests to me that Martin Woollacott's analysis (July 5) is closer than hers to their thinking.

The absorption of Khmer Rouge senior cadre into the government does not have popular support. Would an assimilation of high-ranking officers of the Nazi party into a post-war German government have been popular with Europeans?

Since the KR are not participating in the election as a separate party, many Cambodians understandably base their political allegiances on their experience since the KR were chased out of town in 1979, not the preceding four years.

To suggest that a government should continue in power simply because the other parties have no experience is the same as saying that the British Labor party should never have won its first election.

Cambodia, like other countries, has had, and will continue to have, the government it deserves, based not only on a ballot but also on the level of civil participation after the election.

David Hayter,
Phnom Penh, Cambodia

Wishful thinking in Japan

OH COME ON, Alex Brummer (Sun sets on the Japanese dream, July 12). There are enough symptoms of economic hardship in Japan that you don't need to invent your own. To suggest that prayer plaques with requests such as the one quoted (for help in becoming a JAL flight attendant) are something new is quite incorrect. Similar pragmatic calls to the Japanese *kami* were just as common in the boom years of the mid-1980s, and I suspect they go back a lot further than that.

Furthermore, Japanese Buddhist temples are hardly places where commerce is limited to the sale of a few trinkets such as candles and incense. They have long been businesses in most senses of the word, and are in fact huge money-making operations. As such, they have long been in the business of selling blessings of the type quoted.

Certainly Japan has long sacred traditions. But to suggest that the profane has intruded only in the last few years is to deny the nation's relatively long history of industrial might. It should be remembered that the miracle of post-war Japan is its rapid recovery, not its development.

Steve Cassidy,
Tokyo, Japan

Dutch semantics over citizenship

BY UNCRITICALLY using official Dutch semantics to describe people born in the Netherlands of immigrant parents, Eugene Robinson missed a chance to underscore the Netherlands' reluctance to accept its transformation in the last 40 years from a country producing emigrants to one attracting immigrants (Dutch do battle with identity, July 19).

The "first-generation immigrants" in the Netherlands are what traditional immigrant countries such as the USA would simply call "immigrants".

The oxymoron "second-generation immigrants" is used for people who haven't immigrated; they were born here, to parents who immigrated to the country, and under Dutch law they have the nationality of their father.

Joy Burrough,
Wageningen, Netherlands

Briefly

NICHOLAS Barran's view of the California Dream (July 5) is typical of the top echelon who benefited most from Proposition 13 and the tax-cut crusade which paved the way for Reagonomics and the huge national debt approaching $7 trillion.

Proposition 13 was a turning point from optimistic progressive planning for a more enlightened world based upon good, affordable education for everyone and for community programmes to bring us together. It could have become a model for the nation, but it was cut down. Proposition 13 became a wedge that has separated us economically, socially, racially and sexually. It allowed the religious right to emerge, setting back family planning and women's rights.

L E Partridge,
San Francisco, USA

MARTIN Kettle's piece on the Body Mass Index (BMI) and obesity in the United States (June 14) has a minor error in the BMI formula. Expressed in its metric version, the BMI is elegantly simple: just your weight in kilograms divided by the square of your height in metres. Adapting this formula for pounds and inches involves the conversion factor of 708 (not 703, as in Kettle's article). Incidentally, if obesity and economic success go together, then US obesity in its way tells us something else about the alleged advantages of the metric system.

Geoffrey Davies,
Tripoli, Libya

THE Japanese are widely criticised for their refusal to spend their way out of recession (July 19). Why is this crazy economic orthodoxy not being questioned, and the Japanese praised for their wisdom? Isn't a reduction in consumer demand exactly what the over-stretched resources of this planet desperately need?

David Trubridge,
Havelock North, New Zealand

NOW that Hong Kong's Kai-Tak airport, famous for its vertiginous approach, has been closed (July 12), adventurous airline passengers still intent on enjoying thrilling and steep approaches to public airports should fly to St Barthemy in the French West Indies.

The approach to the nearby Netherlands Antilean islet of Saba is just as thrilling, though less steep. Here you land on a 1,200ft ledge, one side of which has cliffs dropping hundreds of feet down to the rocky sea shore.

J Quentin Henderson,
St Kitts & Nevis, West Indies

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Japan's new leader faces rough ride

Jonathan Watts in Tokyo

DESPITE public opposition and doubts about his ability to manage the economy, Japan's foreign minister, Keizo Obuchi, is set to become prime minister, after a comfortable win in the Liberal Democratic party leadership election last week.

Mr Obuchi, the choice of the LDP's kingmakers, won an overall majority in the first round with 225 votes, far ahead of the 102 of his nearest rival, the former chief cabinet secretary, Seiroku Kajiyama. The people's favourite, the health minister, Junichiro Koizumi, won only 84 votes.

As the LDP controls the powerful lower chamber of parliament, Mr Obuchi was virtually assured of becoming prime minister at the start of a special session this week.

His most pressing task will be to pull the world's second largest economy out of its worst recession in 50 years — a challenge that defeated his predecessor, Ryutaro Hashimoto, who resigned after an upper house election defeat blamed on record unemployment and bankruptcy.

"I will use all my knowledge and ability to get through this troubled period," Mr Obuchi said in a brief victory speech. "I feel a great sense of responsibility."

During an unusually public campaign, Mr Obuchi promised to reverse the government's tight fiscal policy with a permanent $42 billion tax cut and a $70 billion stimulus package. These measures, he said, would ease the pain of clearing up the country's bad loan problems — a task that is expected to involve the failure of several banks.

Critics inside the LDP, however, said Mr Obuchi, known as a slow consensus builder rather than a man of action, was ill-suited to deal with the crisis. "He is too indecisive," said Nobuteru Ishihara, a member of the Koizumi camp. "He lacks economic expertise."

Tokyo stock prices and the Japanese currency showed little change.

Washington Post, page 16

A dying police officer is taken from Washington's Capitol to an ambulance PHOTOGRAPH KLUE BUI

Two die in Capitol gun fight

Ed Vulliamy in Washington

TWO police officers were killed and two people wounded last week as a gunman — known to the secret services as "a threat to the president" — opened fire within the heart of the United States government, the Capitol. Both the House and Senate of the US Congress were in session and teeming with tourists on a sweltering afternoon.

An official identified the suspected gunman as Russell Weston, who is white, aged 41, and was "very well known" to the authorities. He was listed in computer files as having threatened the life of the president.

The two police officers, who died in hospital, were hailed by President Bill Clinton as "heroes". As news came through of the second death, two of their colleagues scaled the Capitol roof to lower the stars and stripes to half-mast.

The spokesman of the Capitol Hill police, Sergeant Dan Nichols, said Jacob Chestnut and John Gibson were "both married, both had three children". Mr Gibson was an eight-year veteran of the service. Mr Chestnut had been with the force for 18 years. The third victim was a visitor, Angela Dickerson, aged 24, who was taken to hospital with gunshot wounds to her face.

The gunman also took multiple wounds as security agents returned fire. It emerged that the suspect's life may have been saved by the senator presiding on the floor when the gunman unleashed his fusillade.

Senator William Frist, a Republican from Tennessee, is also a heart surgeon, and helped to resuscitate two of the wounded before the trauma doctors arrived. He accompanied and treated the suspect in an ambulance.

Witnesses described a sudden volley of gunfire which echoed around the central chamber of the Capitol, in the East Wing, the ground-floor crypt area at the entrance to the document room.

"We heard these shots," said Ronald Beamish, a British tourist, aged 70, who was one of the first to reach a wounded officer. "Everybody scattered. I saw an officer hit the floor. I approached and felt his pulse . . . He was very seriously wounded. He was trying to say something to me. I could not understand him."

The area is an early point of call for tours through one of the world's most famous buildings, and is where the "hideaway offices" of the leadership of the dominant Republican group are based.

The gunman had apparently walked through the central "document" doors with his weapon; the buzzers that traced his gun sounded after a split-second delay.

Police pursued the man, who opened fire as he lunged through the document room. According to Christina Martin, an aide in the office of the House Speaker, Newt Gingrich, he charged past the statue of Thomas Jefferson and towards the office of Congressman Tom DeLay of Texas — the majority whip and number three in the Republican leadership — unleashing his fusillade.

John Feehery, Mr DeLay's press spokesman, said he was in his bunker when the gunman "came in and started firing". He said Mr Gibson "did a great job saving us and saving Congressman DeLay. We heard 15 to 20 shots; it was kind of scary round here."

President Clinton praised the police officers and those who rushed to help. "In this one heartless act," he said, "there were many acts of heroism."

Washington Post, page 15

The Week

PRESCRIPTION rates for the male impotence drug Viagra have fallen by almost half in the United States since they peaked at 303,424 a week in May. Doctors say many patients do not actually want as much sex as they had imagined.

THE Czech president, Vaclav Havel, appointed a minority centre-left Social Democrat cabinet led by Milos Zeman, completing the country's first shift of power to the left since the end of communism in 1989.

THE construction of Jewish settlements in the West Bank and Gaza more than doubled to 730 in the first three months of this year compared with the same period in 1997, according to Peace Now.

POLICE launched an investigation into suspected mass murder following the death of four people after eating food contaminated with cyanide at a festival in Wakayama, Japan.

A FRAGILE ceasefire came into force in Guinea Bissau after nearly two months of civil war. The truce between government troops and rebels is expected to allow for international aid to reach 300,000 people.

YUGOSLAV troops and police dealt a severe blow to the Kosovo Liberation Army when they recaptured a large area of central Kosovo along a key road held by guerrillas for two months.

ASLAN MASKHADOV, the leader of Chechenia, escaped a car bomb in the latest episode of his struggle to prevent the breakaway republic from collapsing into civil war.

A HEATWAVE in the south-western United States has killed at least 143 people and caused $1.5 billion in agricultural damage.

RELATIONS between Athens and Washington have plummeted over divisions on Cyprus, with the Greek foreign minister, Theodoros Pangalos, accusing President Clinton of telling "gross lies".

Tehran's mayor jailed

Julian Borger

TEHRAN'S reformist mayor, Gholamhossein Karbaschi, was sentenced to five years in jail on charges of embezzlement by an Iranian court last week, in what was widely perceived as a conservative backlash against the authority of President Mohammed Khatami.

Delivering an unexpectedly harsh sentence, the judge also banned Mr Karbaschi from politics for 20 years, fined him $348,000, ordered him to pay $6 million in restitution to the city and added a penalty of 60 lashes, suspended for four years.

Mr Karbaschi, one of the president's closest allies who has been Tehran's mayor for the past nine years, was not in court to hear the sentence. He has 20 days in which to appeal.

Judge Gholamhossein Mohseni Ejei, who also acted as prosecutor during the trial, denied that the country's continuing political struggle between conservative clerics and President Khatami's relatively liberal followers had influenced his decision. "It was my duty to deal with this case as with all other cases," he said.

The judiciary is dominated by ultra-conservatives who have tried to use the courts to reverse the president's reform programme since last May's elections.

The conservatives scored another important victory in the courts last week when an outspoken pro-Khatami newspaper, Jameah, was closed down after losing an appeal against the revocation of its licence. Jameah, which had pushed out the limits of political criticism since its launch last year, was accused of publishing "insults and lies".

The conservatives have used their majority in the lower house of parliament to impeach the pro-Khatami interior minister, Abdullah Nouri, but last week the president forced through his choice as successor, Abdolvahed Mousavi-Lari, another moderate cleric.

Singapore bankrupts MP

John Gittings

SINGAPORE'S most vocal opposition MP is being driven into bankruptcy after losing a case which Amnesty International says was politically inspired.

The country's court of appeal said last week it was quintupling the damages against J B Jeyaretnam, one of only three MPs opposing the ruling People's Action party.

Mr Jeyaretnam was found guilty in the high court last year of defaming Singapore's prime minister, Goh Chok Tong, though the trial judge said Mr Goh had overstated his case. The appeal court denounced arguments made by George Carman QC in defence of Mr Jeyaretnam as "playing to the gallery". It said that this constituted an "aggravating factor" and that the damages awarded last September should be increased.

Charles Gray QC, who represented Mr Jeyaretnam in the appeal, said: "It is astonishing in a country which calls itself a democracy not to let political opponents exchange political points through their counsel."

Mr Jeyaretnam has said he will not give up the fight, but cannot pay the amount awarded to Mr Goh. "If Mr Goh pursues me into bankruptcy court, I shan't be able to pay . . . and I will have to vacate my seat in parliament," he said.

Mr Jeyaretnam has been ordered to pay all Mr Goh's costs and a fine of $59,000.

The appeal court also ruled that the high court judge should have found Mr Jeyaretnam guilty of "malice" in making the remark held to be defamatory of Mr Goh: this is regarded as an unusual ruling. It is also odd, in Mr Gray's view, for a court of appeal to intervene on damages in an upwards direction.

Amnesty says that the ruling PAP has used defamation suits to silence dissenting voices. It criticised the appeal court's decision as "a further step in the insidious erosion of the right to free speech".

An Italian soldier offers water to Kurds at a detention centre for illegal immigrants near Otranto, in southern Italy. Boatloads of people are caught daily. On Monday police opened fire on a riot at a camp for illegal immigrants in Agrigento, Sicily, wounding two men. Several police officers and a third migrant were injured in the clash PHOTOGRAPH: DARIO CARICATO

Albright warns Burmese junta

Nick Cumming-Bruce

A WHITE sedan occupied by the Burmese pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi and surrounded by security agents has become the focus of a deepening row with the ruling military junta that is stirring international concern.

Ms Suu Kyi, leader of the National League for Democracy (NLD), on Monday spent her fourth consecutive night in the car, parked where military agents last week stopped it on a rural highway 65km west of Rangoon, in protest at the junta's moves to stop her visiting NLD members outside the capital.

The NLD leader, aged 53, and two colleagues, surviving on biscuits, have refused to answer questions from security men or meet their "request" that they return to Rangoon. Although Ms Suu Kyi is nominally free to travel, it was the third time in as many weeks that authorities stopped her leaving Rangoon.

Authorities said they had intervened either because Ms Suu Kyi had left the capital without her security detail or out of concern that her rural visits might cause political disturbances.

The United States secretary of state, Madeleine Albright, warned that Washington would hold the junta "directly responsible" for the health and safety of Ms Suu Kyi. Ms Albright said she "just wanted to make clear how we deplore the government of Burma's refusal to allow the National League of Democracy, a legal political party, to travel freely in its own country".

She added that refusing freedom of movement to the NLD "can only increase the already dangerous state of tension in Burma".

Speaking in the Philippines capital, Manila, at a meeting of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) and Asia-Pacific powers, she warned that "with each passing day the likelihood of social breakdown, or explosion, that would undermine regional stability grows higher".

The row coincides with rising tension caused by decades of economic misrule and fears that the country is sliding fast towards fresh political turmoil.

Next week marks both the 10th anniversary of the military's brutal suppression of country-wide pro-democracy demonstrations and the deadline Ms Suu Kyi has set the junta for convening the parliament elected in 1990 with a powerful NLD majority but never called.

The junta responded by detaining about 80 of the NLD's elected MPs last month, and opposition sources say it has been carrying out special training courses on riot control for military units, just as ruling generals did 10 years ago.

The authorities have launched a propaganda offensive against Ms Suu Kyi for allegedly seeking confrontation. They accuse the NLD of "colluding with some Western embassies" to stage what one government editorial described as a "fashion-action incident" timed to coincide with the Philippines meeting of regional foreign ministers and aimed at embarrassing the junta.

Ms Albright dismissed the responses to her concerns from Burma's foreign minister, Ohn Gyaw, as "quite typical of an authoritarian government ... that blames the victim for the problem".

Her denunciation has won little public support from Asean governments, which admitted Burma only last year. Even so, the Manila meeting appears to have exposed Ohn Gyaw to more unsympathetic expressions of concern from hitherto reticent Asian neighbours.

Concern about possible instability in Burma and the inflexibility of its military rulers prompted Thailand to urge Asean members to abandon a policy of non-interference in members' affairs in favour of "flexible engagement". The proposal encountered stiff resistance from Indonesia and Malaysia.

Bhutto engulfed in Swiss bank scandal

Owen Bennett Jones in Islamabad

THE FORMER prime minister of Pakistan, Benazir Bhutto, used laundered money to buy a diamond necklace worth $194,000 while in London, according to documents given to investigating authorities in Islamabad by the Swiss government.

The allegation is contained in a memorandum that formally notifies Pakistan that the Swiss authorities are charging Ms Bhutto's husband, Asif Zardari, with money laundering. Mr Zardari, who is being held in Karachi for his alleged involvement in the 1996 murder of Ms Bhutto's estranged brother, Mir Murtaza Bhutto, will be served with the indictment in prison.

Ms Bhutto, Mr Zardari and several of their business associates have been under investigation by a Geneva magistrate, Daniel Devaud, for the past six months. He has concluded that there is sufficient evidence to charge Mr Zardari with "using offshore companies in order to receive commissions" from two Geneva-based companies, which won contracts from the Pakistani government when Ms Bhutto was in power. Mr Devaud has said he also plans to indict Ms Bhutto.

Ms Bhutto and her husband have previously been accused of salting away millions of dollars in as many as 36 secret bank accounts in Switzerland, Britain, France and the United States.

The cash is allegedly the proceeds of bribes accumulated during three years in office, between 1993 and 1996. Government sources say it consists of hard currency and title deeds to hundreds of properties and several businesses — none of which was declared in tax returns. Ms Bhutto denies the allegations.

In the documents handed over to Pakistan, Mr Devaud accuses Ms Bhutto of having had access to laundered money in a secret account in the name of the Bomer Company. She used the money in the account, he says, to buy a necklace that he has seized.

On Monday the government failed to have the Lahore high court frame formal corruption charges against Ms Bhutto. But although the case was postponed, her lawyers privately concede that a full trial is inevitable. Government officials are frustrated by the latest delay but say the legal net is tightening around Ms Bhutto and her husband.

The government's chief corruption investigator, Saif Ur Rehman, has received 760 documents from the Swiss authorities. He says he expects Ms Bhutto's corruption trials — she faces six separate cases in Pakistan — to begin in the next few weeks.

UN sends envoy to Angola

Agencies in New York

WITH an upsurge of violence threatening Angola's United Nations-brokered peace accord, the UN secretary-general, Kofi Annan, is sending a top official on an emergency mission to the country this weekend.

The envoy, Lakhdar Brahimi, a former Algerian foreign minister, will urge the government, and in particular the former rebel movement Unita "to desist from any action which could undermine the peace process and to resume negotiations without delay in order to fully and expeditiously implement the remaining provisions" of the 1994 peace accord, a statement said.

Fighting between the government and Unita has spiralled in recent weeks, with a reported massacre last week in which 215 people were killed, including 88 burned in their huts, a UN spokesman, Fred Eckhard, said on Monday. He added that the survivors blamed Unita, which has denied responsibility for the attack.

Mr Brahimi, the special UN envoy for Afghanistan, will not replace Alioune Blondin Beye, the former head of UN operations in Angola who died in a plane crash in Ivory Coast last month.

Mr Brahimi is expected to evaluate whether it is worth the UN maintaining peacekeepers and other staff in Angola as both the government and the opposition Unita regroup for war. The aim now was less a matter of completing the peace process than preventing another civil war, UN officials said.

Diplomats in the Angolan capital, Luanda, said Unita was conscripting young men and women. It had been reinforced by members of defeated armies in the former Zaire, Rwanda and Congo Republic, they said.

The UN operation is paring down to an infantry company, 90 military observers and support staff to help implement 1994 peace accords that ended more than two decades of civil war.

During a four-year peace process Unita handed over much of its territory to the government and sent ministers to join a government of national unity. But Unita has been reluctant to disband its army and surrender remaining strongholds.

Russia befriends old Afghan foes

James Risen

NEARLY 10 years after the last Soviet troops crossed the Amu Darya river bridge out of Afghanistan, the Russians are back, secretly engaged in the new Afghan war, according to foreign officials.

This time, though, the Russians are after oil, as well as protection of their borders. In what senior United States officials believe may be part of a larger Russian strategy to reassert influence over Central Asia and its vast oil reserves, Moscow has begun to play a major supporting role on the side of a rebel coalition fighting a civil war against the Taliban, the militant Islamic group that controls most of the country.

While Russia has not committed troops to a country where at least 13,000 of its soldiers died during a nine-year occupation, it is supplying heavy weapons, training and logistical support to the Northern Alliance, the group that dominates the mountainous northern tier of Afghanistan.

The Russians are supporting rebel factions controlled by former leaders of the Afghan mojahedin, the Islamic guerrillas who fought the Soviet army in the 1980s with the backing of the CIA. A prime beneficiary of Russian support is the group led by Ahmad Shah Massoud, once one of the most effective mojahedin figures in the CIA's covert programme against the Soviet occupation.

The Russians now find themselves loosely collaborating with Iran in countering the growing power of the Taliban. US officials and other experts say Iran supplies more arms, fuel and other resources to the rebels than Russia.

Opposing Russia and Iran in this confrontation are Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, which back the Taliban.

As the Russians move back into Afghanistan, Washington's role in the country seems to be diminishing. It is only a marginal player, overshadowed by the more direct involvement of US oil companies, foreign officials and experts say.

Russia has decided to develop a broad, strategic relationship with Iran, partly because of their overlapping oil interests in Central Asia, US officials say. Support for the Afghan rebels serves Iranian and Russian economic and political interests. The Northern Alliance acts as a buffer between the Taliban and the Afghan border with the former Soviet republics, while the continuation of civil war prevents Western oil companies from building pipelines across Afghan territory.

Both Russia and Iran fear the potential spread of Taliban radicalism. Moscow wants to ensure that Islamic extremism does not spill north into the former Soviet republics, while Iran's ruling Shia Muslims see the Taliban Sunni Muslims as rivals.

US officials believe Iran and Russia want the planned Caspian oil pipelines to cross Iranian or former Soviet territory. — *New York Times*

Le Monde, page 13

Palestinians pay price for Israel's toxic waste

Julian Borger in Azzun

IF IT were not for its three toxic waste dumps, Azzun would be a pleasant enough place — a hilltop cluster of pale stone houses like many old Arab towns on the West Bank. But the fumes from the nearby dumps make eyes and throats itch after just a few hours. For the 8,000 people who live here, they are potentially lethal.

Dr Abdul-Rahmen Abu-Hanieh has tended to the health of the local people for the past 11 years. During that time he has witnessed a tenfold increase in the incidence of cancer — mainly leukaemia, prostate cancer and Hodgkin's disease. He has no doubt about the cause.

"It's the dumps. The Israelis don't care what they unload there — all sorts of chemicals. Who knows what? In all the other villages where I go to fill in death certificates there are maybe one or two cases of cancer. Here there are 10 or 11 a year," Dr Abu-Hanieh says.

If he is right, Azzun's dead are victims of its political geography. The town is only 30km from the industrial conurbation of Tel Aviv, but since it lies in the occupied West Bank, under army jurisdiction, Israeli waste-disposal laws are not fully enforced. So every few nights trucks appear from the west and empty their cargo on Azzun's doorstep.

Local Palestinians dump their domestic rubbish there too, compounding the problem. But Israeli and Palestinian environmental activists say almost all the toxic chemicals dumped in Azzun can be traced back to Israeli industries. "Our town has become a dustbin," the mayor, Ehsan Abdul-Latif, complained.

He brought the town out to protest at the dump-site last week, but there is little more he can do. His authority runs only as far as the municipal boundaries. The waste is dumped just beyond, in areas still under Israeli rule.

It is a pattern repeated in the nearby Palestinian towns of Qalqilya and Tulkarm — forming a triangle of ecological desolation.

And the effects could rebound on Israel itself. "Qalqilya and Tulkarm are on top of the most important water aquifers in the region," said Mohammed al-Hmaidi, director-general of the Palestinian Environment Authority (PEA). "It supplies both Israelis and the Palestinians. If it is polluted it will affect everyone."

At one of Azzun's dumps, 30km from a gateway marking the entrance to the town, the waste heap is a kaleidoscope of unnatural colours — such as the burnt orange-black of potassium iodide, set off against the blinding white of methylates and organo-phosphorous crystals. An analysis by the PEA found more than 20 toxic compounds at the site.

Mohammed Abu-Hanieh, a local farmer and a distant relative of the doctor, recited a long list of relatives who had died of cancer in recent years, including his wife, brother and cousin. "It is a crime," he said, casting his eyes down to the strangely hued dust beneath him.

Israel's environment ministry rejects suggestions that waste-dumping is tolerated in Palestinian areas. "From time to time we discover that some companies do it and we fully co-operate with the Palestinian authorities to take those responsible to court," Shmuel Brenner, a senior ministry official, said.

There have been a handful of arrests recently, but the dumping continues. It is driven by hard economics. According to Mr al-Hmaidi of the PEA, it costs about $65 to hire a driver — usually a Palestinian — to dump a five-tonne truck of waste chemicals in the West Bank. To dispose of the same volume at Ramat Hovav in the Negev desert, Israel's only approved dump site for toxic chemicals, costs more than $11,000.

"Dumps are being closed in Israel, increasing the incentive to go and dump on the West Bank," said Gidon Bromberg, the Israeli director of the environmental action group Ecopeace.

Environmentalists say the West Bank is suffering the overspill effects of a profound Israeli ecological crisis. The seriousness of the situation was brought home last July, when a bridge over the polluted Yarkon river collapsed during an international sports event. Four Australian athletes died, two of them from simply swallowing the toxic water. Another 15-year-old victim is still in hospital.

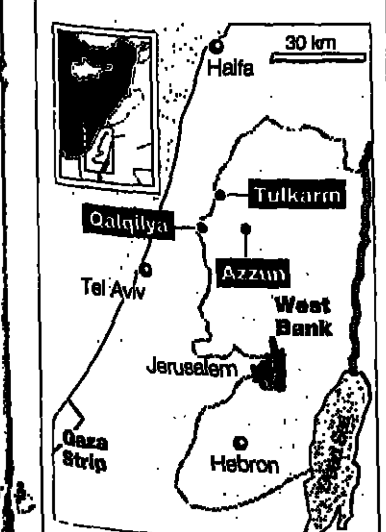
It is not just waste that is flowing across the paradoxically named "Green Line" between Israel and the Palestinian territories. As Israel tries to curb pollution, whole factories are on the move to cheaper, under-policed sites.

Mr Hmaidi said: "There is an on-going process of transferring dirty industries, such as aluminium, asbestos, paint-making and pesticides, from Israel, where there is public resistance to them, to the West Bank."

The Gishuri Industries pesticide factory is a vivid example. After Israeli environmental protests, it moved about 10 years ago from Tel Aviv to Tulkarm, where it now pumps a daily cloud of waste products over the Palestinian neighbourhood 50m away.

Employees at Gishuri Industries refused to talk. At the ministry Mr Brenner said he had heard there were environmental problems concerning the factory and others around Tulkarm, and that a programme of action was planned.

The PEA's Mr Hmaidi will believe it when he sees it. He views the ministry as well-meaning but relatively powerless on the lawless roads of the occupied territories.



Mafia threat mars Nigeria poll hopes

Alex Duval Smith in Kaduna

IF GENERAL Abdulsalam Abubakar fails to lead Nigeria towards civilian rule, it is less likely to be a tank that stands in his way than a gleaming Mercedes belonging to those who would lose out from democracy — the Kaduna mafia.

The military leader's pledge, made last month, to have a civilian president installed on May 29 next year has been broadly welcomed.

But for democracy to work, Gen Abubakar must first eradicate the country's secretive alternative government, which is based in this neat city of covered sewers and no potholes, created by the British as part of their divide-and-rule strategy.

Some claim the mafia no longer exists after expanding as far as the smart suburbs of north London. But others argue that its corrupt influence is more pervasive than ever.

"Democracy is less urgent for Nigeria than ending the corruption and monopoly of power of the bourgeoisie. Elections can only work if there are no moneybags involved," said Balarabe Musa, a former governor of Kaduna state.

Kaduna, in the Muslim north, is where the kickbacks from the wealth of the world's fifth-largest oil producing country are most visible.

While the city's 300,000 populace queues for hours for fuel, former ministers furnish their mansions with wealth diverted by their military connections in the capital, Abuja, two hours away.

Every Nigerian knows how it works. Business people, and some with political ambitions such as the late Moshood Abiola, give favours to the military leaders for supply contracts. Utilities such as transport, hospitals and oil refineries are controlled by friends of the leadership. They receive allocations from the state — oil barrels or a grant for medicines — which they pocket.

The claims to democracy will remain hearsay until Nigeria sets up tribunals to deal with those who, during 38 years of independence, have diverted the country's wealth.

Washington Post, page 16

Brussels run by bunch of Enarchs

Europe this week

Martin Walker

HOW do the French get away with it? Last week they managed to flout a ruling of the European Court of Justice that their $2 billion subsidy of Air France was illegal by getting the European Commission to redraft the rules retroactively. British Airways and other competitors, who had brought the lawsuit, howled with understandable outrage.

How was this achieved? Neil Kinnock, the European Commissioner for Transport, had to explain and defend this transparent fix after the Commission meeting. He was acting, he said, on legal advice. And that came from the man sometimes nicknamed the Mole of Paris, the head of the Commission's legal service, Jean-Louis Dewost.

Dewost, placed in that key post by Jacques Delors in 1987, is just one of several Frenchmen judiciously inserted in strategic jobs across the Commission. Dewost, it scarcely needs saying, is an Enarch, one of the graduates of France's Ecole Normale d'Administration, which is to that highly centralised and bureaucratic country what Eton, Oxford, the Brigade of Guards and the Treasury are to Britain.

Enarchs are the mandarins of mandarins, and now that Lenin's Central Committee of the Communist party has disappeared, they make up the tightest-knit establishment on the planet. They include the current French president, Jacques Chirac, who is a conservative, and the current Socialist prime minister, Lionel Jospin, and of course the last conservative one, Alain Juppé. Political allegiances come and go. The solidarity of what the French call *l'Enarchie* is for ever.

That is one way the French get away with it. Another is that they are prepared to be utterly shameless in promoting their national interest. Witness the appalling row over who runs the new European Central Bank, which so marred the May Day launch of the new single currency.

Another way the French get away with it is by sheer bloody-mindedness. Take another example from last week. One of the more striking successes of European Union trade policy has been in Latin America, which has become the world's fastest-growing region since Asia became embroiled in crisis. It is the United States' back yard, and President Clinton tried hard to consolidate US economic dominance by extending Nafta, the North American Free Trade Agreement (which includes Mexico and Canada) to Chile, and then to Argentina and elsewhere. He was balked by an unusual Congressional alliance of Republicans determined to block every Clinton initiative, and Democrats worried about American jobs being lost to low-paid foreign workers.

This was Europe's opportunity, and the EU moved in quickly with promises of trade pacts and investment. The latest figures show that EU countries now outdo the US both in foreign investment and in trade with Mercosur, the trade block that unites Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay and Paraguay. A smart move, you might think, and one which justifies the Commission in proposing full-scale free trade negotiations with Mercosur and Chile, to be concluded by next spring's EU-Latin American summit.

Ah, but don't forget the French. Last week, asserting that it was simply "not feasible" to submit Europe's farmers to competition from Argentine beef and grain and Brazilian sugar, they put their Gallic *pied* down. Both French commissioners voted against the negotiating mandate, and French officials made it clear that they would block any such trade agreement in the Council of Ministers.

Manuel Marin, the Spanish commissioner who has run the preliminary negotiations with Mercosur, counts himself a devoted Francophile. Like many Spanish democrats of his generation, he took refuge in France when Franco's regime proved too hot for him. And he understands enough of France's traditional anti-Americanism to argue that the French ought to back the Mercosur deal as a way to dish the Americans. "Europe should have no complexes about maintaining our advantage over the US. We cannot afford to lose these emerging markets, and lose a position so favourable to our interests," he said after last week's Commission vote.

But Marin forgot that other aspect of French policy, its deep suspicion of the increasingly dominant Anglo-Saxon theology of free trade and free markets. Europe was established as a protectionist system, designed to protect European farmers and industries within a trading block and to guarantee the European way of life. That is still how the French would like to see it, despite defeat after defeat as the new free trading world order has taken hold.

THE FRENCH move brings into the open a fundamental debate about the nature of the globalised economy and the Anglo-American orthodoxy which believes in free market forces and free trade, and opposes protection.

France sees the Mercosur debate as a test case in its bid to slow the free-trade juggernaut, after Russia announced that it intends to hold the EU to its promise to start negotiations on a free-trade deal before the end of this year. Ukraine, the pre-1914 breadbasket of Europe whose food export potential could alone swamp Europe's common agricultural policy, waits in the wings for a similar free-trade arrangement.

Paris has chosen this moment to take a stand because French officials believe farmers across Europe will rally against the threat of cheap beef, wheat and wine from Argentina and the other Mercosur countries. "To enter into direct competition with these countries as regards agriculture, even for a transitional period of 10 to 12 years, is not feasible," says the formal French government response to the Commission's draft plan for a new free-trade agreement.

Before dismissing all this as another French outrage, as Tony Blair doubtless did when he spent a day showing Jospin around his constituency in Northeast England last week, bear in mind that Paris has a point. The new Anglo-Saxon theology of free trade and free markets makes for winners, losers and victims. Just ask Asia. The current state of the global economy hardly suggests that the free marketeers have found the holy grail of endless growth.

And before condemning Europe as the Enarchs' playground, think of it from the French point of view. They are being squeezed out of their traditional colonies in Africa by the Americans. Their hopes of a separate European defence identity have been dashed. Their demand for the Mediterranean command as the price of rejoining Nato was politely rebuffed. Their language has lost its dominant status in Europe. And it looks as though even a return to recession in Britain could leave the UK with lower unemployment than France at the height of its current economic recovery.

It's a funny thing about élite civil service networks. Whether one looks at Mandarin China, 20th century Britain, or France in the grip of l'Enarchie, a Rolls-Royce bureaucracy tends to end up with a lemon of an economy, and a nation with good cause to resent the record of its brilliant administrators.

Apple of the mayor's eye

Has Rudolph Giuliani's clean-up of New York gone a step too far, asks **Edward Helmore**

HE'S CRACKED down on the Mob and thereby reduced the price of mackerel; he's clamped down on jaywalkers, street vendors, taxi drivers and nightclubbers. He's even built himself a nuclear bunker. But New York's disciplinarian mayor, Rudolph Giuliani, is only just getting into his puritanical stride.

Last-minute legal appeals against sweeping new anti-pornography laws failed last week and it now appears almost certain that sex shops and strip clubs will be a thing of the past in the Naked City. No matter that many people associate New York with unshackled desire; Giuliani has decreed that sex, or at least topless dancers and porn, is incompatible with quality of life.

The patrons of such fleshpots as Billy's Topless, Peepworld and the Big Top Lounge may still able to enjoy the gyrating delights of Tiffany and Amber and the other go-go girls but not quite as intimately as they have become accustomed to. From now on, the girls must be covered in order to comply with the rulings, or face the hand of the law as dispensed by 500 inspectors fanning out from City Hall.

X-rated video shops and porno-theatres are also threatened with closure. Under the new law, all of the 164 establishments in the city must close if they lie within 500 feet of homes, churches, schools, and daycare centres. City officials claim that 146 adult establishments currently violate the law.

Times Square will be hardest hit. Since the seventies, the number of adult businesses around the landmark area has plunged from 120 to 19. Under the new law, the number should drop to six. While considering a run for higher office, the mayor has said that carrying out the restrictions of sex shops is high on his list of priorities, and the crackdown plays a starring role in his roster of "quality-of-life" improvements that he tirelessly champions. Sex-orientated shops, he says, destroy neighbourhoods and "discourage legitimate businesses".

At Billy's Topless, a small dive bar in Chelsea, the mood is decidedly sombre. For the first time that any patrons can remember the girls are wearing bikini tops and shorts — more than the customary G-string and bare breasts. "It's really affecting business. On a normal Tuesday the place would be packed," says Alison, one of the hostesses. "Is the human body something to be ashamed of? Only in New York."

Some patrons were livid. "My feelings are being ignored," fumed Carlos Perez, seemingly a nightly regular here. "If Giuliani wants to be the dictator that he is, it's not going to work. We're all going to go underground." Al, a middle-aged city engineer agreed: "In the US, we have paramilitaries with the right to carry M16s but you can't have girls go topless. It's absurd."

Unless the US Supreme Court agrees to hear the case and issue a stay while they consider an appeal against the law on First Amendment grounds, New York's legitimate sex trade will now be ruined or pushed into outlying areas.



Now you see it, soon you won't . . . New York's sex trade is in full retreat PHOTOGRAPH: ENRICO FERORELLI

It is not only the dirty mac brigade who object to Giuliani's latest crackdown. The strip clubs near Wall Street are popular lunch-spots for traders and in the fashionable districts of SoHo and Tribeca visiting the clubs is a popular pastime. Moreover New Yorkers are fiercely libertarian, and though they may not frequent strip bars or porno shops, they like to think that they could.

Even New York's new school of feminists object to the measures and argue that porno shops are a necessary part of society. "Putting enough regulations on something is the functional equivalent of banning it," says American Civil Liberties Union president Nadine Strossen, author of Defending Pornography: Free Speech, Sex And The Fight For Women's Rights.

But the appeal of the strip club tradition is lost on Giuliani, and he has already warned that having strippers stop at their bikinis isn't enough to prevent closure. "They're not going to have to get around things, they're going to have to reform themselves and change the essential nature of the kind of operation that they are," he said.

New York Councilman Walter McCaffrey, who helped draft the zoning law, says efforts to outfit topless dancers with bathing suits will fail because of market competition. "These folks are in denial," he said. "People aren't going to pay $7.50 for a juice to watch something they can see on Rockaway Beach."

Triple-X rated video shops are attempting to stave off ruin by complying with a so-called 60-40 rule that allows them to peddle porn as long as the steamy titles make up less than 40 per cent of the inventory. Thus owners are stocking up with martial arts videos, films and tourist tat. The penalties for non-compliance are stiff — up to $5,000 in fines and/or 60 days in jail.

New Yorkers may be unhappy with the changes but they follow a pattern throughout the city. Increasingly, stores such as Niketown, the Gap, Starbucks and the Body Shop are setting the tone and have pushed out any lingering echoes of the gritty, seedy place immortalised in the film Taxi Driver.

"Look, even Las Vegas is getting children-orientated," says Garry Leonard, a professor at the University of Toronto who studies pornography. "And I think the word is getting out that Times Square has changed and Disney is coming in."

Martin Kettle is on holiday

Macedonia accused of ethnic abuses

Jonathan Steele in Gostivar

UNLIKE in Serbia's Kosovo province — where de facto apartheid means Serbs and ethnic Albanians go to their own cafés, schools and shops — Macedonia's two main communities still share amenities.

Yet for many Albanian Macedonians the empty mayoral chair in the western town of Gostivar is a more potent symbol than the integration of public facilities. Mayor Rufi Osman recently began a seven-year prison term for flying the Albanian flag over the town hall. And the mayor of northern Tetovo, Alaedin Demiri, received 2½ years for a similar offence. The mayors' supporters reject ministers' defence of the sentences as punishment for "separatism".

"We accept the Macedonian state. That is not the problem," says Menduh Thaci, vice-president of the Democratic Party of Albanians (DPA). "The issue is equal rights."

Foreign diplomats, he says, are "obsessed with stability, but it's on the back of the Albanians here".

What the diplomats fear is that the northwestern regions of Macedonia, where ethnic Albanians are in a majority, might try to secede and join Albania proper. A string of Western ministers travels ritually to the Macedonian capital, Skopje, to pledge support for President Kiro Gligorov.

They also like to trumpet the United Nations Preventive Deployment Force (Unpredep) — the border force of foreign police and 750 United States and Scandinavian troops that back them — as the first UN peacekeeping mission to be put in place before a war, in hopes of preventing a conflict.

Unpredep guards Macedonia from a menace it calls spill-over. But the country's Albanians say the danger is not spill-over from Kosovo's communal independence fight, but existing abuses in Macedonia which the UN forces and foreign diplomats are doing little to check.

Macedonia was the most reluctant of the four republics that left Yugoslavia in the early 1990s. Since independence its ruling élite has tried to develop a new identity by, among other moves, defining the region's medieval churches as Macedonian Orthodox and putting frescoes on the banknotes.

It has also riled its neighbours. The Orthodox church in Serbia refuses to accept the new ecclesiastical definitions, Bulgaria refuses to accept Macedonian as a separate language, and Greece even rejects the state's right to call itself Macedonia.

Albanians say a vital opportunity is being missed. "The international forces in Macedonia haven't finished their job. They should help to democratise this country," says Arben Xhaferi, leader of the DPA. "We haven't had a transition from a communist state. We have just recycled communists in power." Mr Xhaferi broke from the main Albanian party, the Party of Democratic Prosperity, which has five seats in the cabinet of the governing coalition.

Blagoj Handziski, the foreign minister, says it is unreasonable for one minority to be treated as a nation when the country has four others — Turks, Serbs, Roma and Vlachs. "We cannot accept any federalisation. We prefer a civil society with equal rights for all."

On the right, Macedonian chauvinism is rising. The VMRO, a hardline party with a long pedigree of virulent nationalism, calls for the government to sack its Albanian ministers.

Vlok blames Botha for SA bombing

David Beresford in Pretoria

SOUTH AFRICA'S former police minister, Adriaan Vlok, told the Truth and Reconciliation Commission last week that it was a demand for "action" from the country's former president, P W Botha, that led to Mr Vlok's decision to blow up the headquarters of the South African Council of Churches in 1988.

Mr Vlok said Mr Botha took him to one side after a meeting of the state security council at the president's official residence in Cape Town and urged him to act against a church building in Johannesburg, Khotso House, which security-force commanders believed was being used by guerrillas of the African National Congress.

The president told him: "You people must make that building unusable. Deny them the further use of it. Whatever you do, you must make certain that no people are killed," Mr Vlok recalled.

The former minister added: "He did not say what had to be done. He said something had to be done . . . I had no doubt that some irregular action had to be taken."

Twenty-one people were injured in the blast, which Mr Vlok subsequently blamed on an innocent social worker, Shirley Gunn.

Mr Vlok, who was minister of law and order between 1986 and 1994 — the most bloody phase of the anti-apartheid struggle — appeared before the truth commission in support of his application for amnesty for three covert bombing operations carried out by police on his instructions.

The former minister offered a moral balance-sheet which concluded that the country could count itself fortunate for having been saved from communist dictatorship, while conceding that he and fellow cabinet ministers carried "moral and political" responsibility for excesses committed by the security forces.

Apartheid was "unbearable and morally indefensible", he said. But the "sour fruits and injustices" were not the intention of those who formulated the ideology. "We only had the best of intentions for ourselves, for the rest of South Africans and also for our country."

However, he said, "we planted the tree and we have to accept the moral and political responsibility for its fruits".

The Week in Britain James Lewis

Britain's elaborate plans to kill Hitler revealed

WHY, it has often been asked, did Britain make no serious attempt on the life of Hitler during the second world war, and so perhaps shorten the conflict? The answer, it turns out, is that a plan of sorts was concocted to assassinate the Führer but was abandoned, apparently because military chiefs considered he was best left alive to continue his strategic blundering in the closing months of the war.

Hitherto secret documents, made public last week, show how agents of the Special Operations Executive (SOE), set up to work behind enemy lines, made elaborate plans — codenamed Operation Foxley — to kill Hitler either by a sniper's shot at Berchtesgaden, his Alpine retreat, or by a bomb attack on his special train, or even by poisoning his tea. The scheme was broadly sanctioned by the Foreign Secretary, Anthony Eden.

The seeds of the plan to liquidate Hitler were sown by a French colonel, who suggested the attack should be made on the Führer while he was staying at a château in southern France. That opportunity was missed and later pressure to launch the attach at Berchtesgaden was opposed by the chiefs of staff, who argued that "from the strictly military point of view it is almost an advantage that Hitler should remain in control of German strategy".

Strong opposition came from a Major Field-Robertson, head of SOE's German section, who said that assassination would "canonise" Hitler, adding that "it would be disastrous if the world came to think that the Allies had to resort to these low methods as though they were otherwise unable to defeat the German military machine".

Detailed accounts of Hitler's daily routine at Berchtesgaden were drawn up, and Captain Edmund Bennett, a "military attaché" in Washington and reportedly a terrible shot, was selected as the assassin. But Operation Foxley was abandoned in early 1945, just a few weeks before Hitler and his mistress, Eva Braun, committed suicide together in the Berlin bunker.

LABOUR rather belatedly honoured the second half of its famous law-and-order manifesto promise when it undertook to be "tough on the causes of crime" as well as on crime itself.

The Home Secretary, Jack Straw, who has hitherto seemed intent on pursuing the populist policies of his Tory predecessor, Michael Howard — more prison, longer sentences, zero tolerance — seemed to repent when he published a research report last week that demolished the most common myths about crime control.

Mr Straw who, not so long ago, declared war on "squeegee merchants, winos and beggars", is now to engage in a crime reduction strategy that incorporates literacy programmes for old lags, targeting high-profile repeat offenders and "hot-spot" criminal areas, special support for victims, and early intervention among children and families at risk of drifting into crime.

The report, Reducing Offending, is the combination of more than 40 years of criminological research. It argued that increasing police numbers, providing young offenders with vocational training but no job at the end of it, counselling courses and unstructured therapy by the probation service, has had little effect in cutting crime. But it also warned that the new strategy will deliver sustained cuts in crime only over a long period.

The Home Office's aim is to reverse the trend of annual increases of 5 per cent in crime which has persisted in Britain since the first world war.

EIGHT of Britain's older nuclear power stations will close within 10 years, and the Magnox reprocessing works at Sellafield in Cumbria will cease operations by 2020, under a deal agreed by the Deputy Prime Minister, John Prescott.

The aim is to make large reductions in the discharge of radioactive material into the sea. Britain had been given 18 months to come up with a plan to comply with conditions set down in Sintra, Portugal, by 15 European members of the Oslo-Paris Convention, which controls pollution in the north-east Atlantic.

The Magnox generators to be closed are Calder Hall at Sellafield; Chapel Cross, Dumfries; Bradwell, Essex; Dungeness A, Kent; Hinkley Point A, Somerset; Sizewell A, Suffolk; Oldbury, Somerset, and Wylfa, Anglesey. They and the reprocessing plant at Sellafield between them employ some 3,000 people.

THE QUEEN, as though acknowledging the enduring power of Diana, Princess of Wales, gave the order for flags to be flown at half-mast on the first anniversary of her death, on August 31.

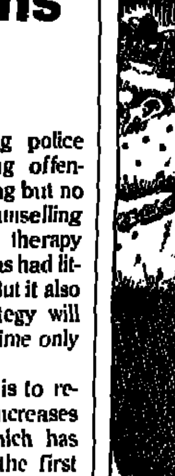
The decision is in stark contrast to the Queen's initial response after the princess's death last year, when she at first ignored calls for lowered flags, defending her stance by citing protocol and tradition. She later backed down, yielding to the public clamour for a visible sign of respect.

Buckingham Palace declined to say whether the Queen's present move was a ploy to endear the royal family to a nation that that has come to regard the Windsors as aloof but has deified the "People's Princess".

THE J SAINSBURY supermarket chain has been targeted by animal rights campaigners who are trying to stop the import of kangaroo meat from animals killed in "cruel" culls.

At present the only national chain selling the meat, J Sainsbury was accused by the campaigners of contributing to "one of the biggest wildlife massacres" by persisting with the trade from Australia.

Both the Australian government and J Sainsbury insisted the kangaroos were slaughtered under tightly policed programmes to control numbers and protect the environment. Campaigners, however, claimed that many kangaroos are killed inhumanely. They also insist that more are destroyed than official cull figures indicate, and that they are not a threat to either crops or grazing for sheep or cattle.





Lords win delay over gay reform

Lucy Ward and Madeleine Bunting

A REDUCTION in the gay age of consent was blocked in the House of Lords last week as peers provoked a constitutional storm by voting to overturn the huge Commons majority backing the change.

Gay rights campaigners reacted angrily as the amendment to equalise the gay and heterosexual age of consent at 16 was thrown out by 168 votes — 290 to 122.

The pressure from the Lords succeeded in delaying a lowering of the gay age of consent as the Government on Monday agreed to drop the measure from its crime bill in return for promises to reintroduce it in the next parliamentary session.

The Home Secretary, Jack Straw, described it as an "impasse". It means an equal age of consent at 16 for gays and heterosexuals, backed by MPs, is not expected to reach the statute book until 1999, or later.

However, the Government will now be sure of pushing through the Crime and Disorder Bill, including 12 manifesto commitments and youth justice reforms, before the end of the parliamentary session.

Mr Straw persuaded MPs supporting reform to accept last week's Lords vote blocking the reduction in return for guarantees of a fast-tracked bill in the autumn. Ann Keen, proposer of the equalisation amendment, and Stephen Twigg, one of six gay MPs, said they were "delighted" with the Government's response.

Negotiations since the Lords vote last week centred on ways to broaden the age of consent clause to include measures protecting 16- to 18-year-olds from abuse by adults in authority over them. In the end, the Government judged it could not be sure of winning over peers, and feared the legislation would run out of parliamentary time.

A former Tory Cabinet minister, Baroness Young, with cross-party backing, spearheaded the move to vote down equalising the age of consent. She called the change "seriously flawed" and said too little parliamentary time had been given to discussion of the reform.

Meanwhile hopes of preventing the issue of homosexuality splitting the Lambeth Conference of 735 Anglican bishops, meeting in Canterbury last week, ended in tatters after an alliance of African and evangelical bishops forced organisers to cancel a presentation by lesbian and gay Christians.

Many African bishops are dismissive of homosexuality, an issue which they consider trivial compared with international debt and relations with Islam.

Observers warned that "horse-trading" linking support for easing Third World debt with opposition to homosexuality was taking place.

The Rt Rev Duncan Buchanan, the Bishop of Johannesburg, responsible for steering the controversial issue through the conference, said there were some who had "an agenda" in which support on the issue of cancelling international debt has been traded for support from Third World bishops for the evangelical cause of blocking homosexuality.

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr George Carey, later attended a reception of the Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement in Canterbury, a gesture that many interpreted as an olive branch to the gay lobby.

Comment, page 12

No pardon for 'deserters'

THE Government last week expressed its "deep sense of regret" for the execution of 306 British soldiers in the first world war, but refused to grant those executed for cowardice or desertion a free pardon, *writes Michael White.*

While the Western Front Association called the compromise "fair and acceptable", the Royal British Legion called it welcome but disappointing, as did some Labour and Liberal Democrat MPs. Some families of the dead accused ministers of "having their arms twisted" by the military since taking office.

In an emotionally charged statement to the Commons, the army minister, John Reid, sought to soften the blow by urging that the 306 names be added to their local war memorials.

Police stop blacks eight times more than whites

Duncan Campbell

BLACK people are nearly eight times more likely to be stopped and searched by police than their white counterparts, according to research by Statewatch, the independent police research group that monitors law enforcement affairs throughout Europe.

The research indicates that in some areas as many as one in five black people are arrested in a year. The national arrest rate is about five times higher than for whites.

The countrywide analysis of stop-and-search and arrest figures concludes that the variation in the use of police powers is more pronounced than previously thought.

The ethnic variations are a matter of great concern, according to the research. Four forces stop more than 100 black people per 1,000 population: Merseyside (189), the Metropolitan police (141), Cleveland (135) and Dyfed Powys (118).

When the differences in stop-and-search rates between white people and other ethnic groups are compared for individual police forces, Surrey heads the list, with black people eight times more likely to be stopped and searched than whites.

The Home Secretary, Jack Straw, said that he would examine the disparity in the figures.

Chris Myant, a spokesman for the Commission for Racial Equality, said the figures merely confirmed the daily experience for black people for decades. "It is good that at last official figures let society see what is happening to ordinary citizens in the streets every day," he said. He added that the figures explained the alienation highlighted by the Stephen Lawrence inquiry.

In Brief

A CABINET Office report has revealed that absenteeism among the 5 million public sector workers costs the economy £3 billion a year and that they take sick leave at a rate one third higher than those working for private companies.

SINN FEIN faces exclusion from Northern Ireland's new power-sharing executive after the police said it believed the IRA was responsible for the murder of Andy Kearney in a punishment beating last month.

MINISTERS have published plans for a disability rights commission to champion the cause of disabled people.

LOUISE SULLIVAN, an Australian nanny working in Britain, has been charged with the murder of Caroline Jongen, a six-month-old girl in her care.

THE HOME Secretary, Jack Straw, won a House of Lords test case over his power to detain murderers in prison after they have served their tariff.

JUDGES who are freemasons or who refuse to say whether they belong to the secret society will be "outed" in a register to be published by the Lord Chancellor in the autumn.

THE Criminal Cases Review Commission, the body responsible for investigating alleged miscarriages of justice said it needs to double its staff to cope with its workload. Claims of wrongful convictions are arriving at the rate of five a day.

BARONESS YOUNG of Old Scone, a new Labour life peer, has been confirmed as the BBC governors' vice chairwoman, ending weeks of speculation and political rows.

A RADICAL shake-up of "outdated" licensing laws may lead to some city pubs and nightclubs being open 24 hours a day to reduce drink-related crime by staggering opening hours.

A CHAUFFEUR who regularly drove the car in which Diana, Princess of Wales, died, has said that it had persistent braking problems, sources close to the French investigation into the crash said.

A MALE nurse has been suspended as police launched an inquiry into suspicious deaths at a hospital in Greater Manchester, and into allegations of indecency, assault and the misuse of drugs on patients.

THE GANG responsible for killing two young mothers in front of their children has been linked to a third murder — of Patrick Ferguson, a plasterer — an attempted murder and a rape.

Mandelson given trade role as Blair reshuffles Cabinet

Michael White

TONY Blair's long-awaited ministerial reshuffle this week made him undisputed master of his Cabinet when he sacked four failing colleagues, promoted Blairite new blood and forced Gordon Brown and Peter Mandelson to stifle their barely-concealed rivalry at the top.

At the end of Mr Blair's first drama-packed Cabinet reshuffle, neither traditionalists nor modernisers could claim to have won most of the spoils in the Prime Minister's carefully rebalanced team — though the removal of the Chancellor's ally, Nick Brown, as Chief Whip was widely seen as a blow to the so-called Gordon Brownites.

But Nick Brown was tactfully rewarded with a full Cabinet post, as Agriculture Minister, following Jack Cunningham's promotion to be "enforcer" in the Cabinet Office. That move best underlined Downing Street's determination not to be made a prisoner of faction, real or perceived. A mixture of Old and New Labour meritocrats duly shared the plum appointments.

Downing Street stressed a new formality to the way the 14-month-old regime does its business and dismissed talk of ideological feuds as "personality spats, a lot of it fuelled by people who believed they were serving their ministers when they were not".

With Harriet Harman, David Clark and Gavin Strang all leaving the Cabinet — unexpectedly joined by Lord Richard, Leader of the Lords — unscheduled drama was provided by Frank Field, doyen of rightwing welfare reformers.

Refused Ms Harman's job as Social Security Secretary and asked to leave the Department of Social Security — where his failure to provide effective reform options has disappointed Mr Blair — Mr Field turned down two other offers, as "fraud tsar" or a cross-departmental drugs minister. Instead he returned to the back benches, leaving Tory and Lib Dem MPs to protest that welfare reform is now in tatters.

Downing Street insisted that welfare reform would remain at the heart of the Government's agenda.

The departure from government of not only Ms Harman but also Mr Field, leaves a vacuum where Labour had promised a hive of activity and creative thinking.

Mr Field's welfare reform Green Paper, on which consultation closes on Friday, could now be sidetracked. But the new Social Security Secretary, Alistair Darling, has been told he must regain the momentum of reform.

As for Mr Mandelson, the most turbulent architect of Labour modernisation, he was given the "real job" he has long urged — running the weighty Department of Trade and Industry, instead of image-moulding behind the scenes. "There's a strong message in all this for Peter. It is 'go out and show you can do it'," one well-placed official explained.

With the economy faltering and unions suspicious of his instincts, Mr Mandelson has a formidable task to add to his continuing role as "Millennium Dome Secretary".

In a gesture of conciliation, Mr Brown invited Mr Mandelson to his private flat at Westminster late last Sunday for over an hour of discussion about how they will co-operate on economic policy.

Stephen Byers, the Blairite moderniser, becomes the first Class of '92 MP to enter the Cabinet as Mr Brown's deputy, Chief Secretary to the Treasury.

Another of the Health Secretary Frank Dobson's team, Baroness Margaret Jay — daughter of Lord Callaghan — gets Lord Richard's job, the fourth new face in Cabinet, ahead of the tricky fight over abolition of hereditary voting rights.

"I am sorry not to have the opportunity to see Lords reform through. I shall now have to earn my living in another way," a wounded Lord Richard said. But others did better, so that Ann Taylor — Britain's first woman Chief Whip — will now work with Margaret Beckett as Leader of the Commons.

Dr John Reid, a well-regarded Army Minister, was shifted to Dr Strang's old post, the politically sensitive job of Transport Minister under John Prescott, the Deputy Prime Minister.

Mr Blair made his dispositions at Chequers last Sunday along with his most trusted and objective intimates — Jonathan Powell, chief of staff, Sir Richard Wilson, Cabinet Secretary, Sally Morgan, his political secretary, and Anji Hunter, his Downing Street planner and oldest political friend. None is elected.

Estelle Morris will be promoted to Mr Byers's post of schools standards minister. John Denham, former Trotskyist, now arch-moderniser, will move to Mr Field's job.

Helen Liddell, Economic Secretary, will move into Donald Dewar's slipstream at the Scottish Office, likely to succeed him when he goes to the Scottish Parliament next year.

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Minister with portfolio: Peter Mandelson moves to Trade

Ministerial moves

UP

- **Jack Cunningham** — Agriculture to Cabinet Office
- **Peter Mandelson** — Enters Cabinet as Trade Secretary
- **Stephen Byers** — Enters Cabinet as Chief Secretary toTreasury
- **Baroness Jay** — Enters Cabinet as Leader of the Lords
- **Alistair Darling** — From Chief Secretary to Social Security
- **John Reid** — Defence Minister to Transport outside Cabinet

DOWN

- **Harriet Harman** — Sacked as Social Security Secretary
- **Frank Field** — Resigned as Welfare Reform Minister
- **David Clark** — Sacked as Cabinet Office Minister
- **Gavin Strang** — Sacked as Transport Minister
- **Lord Richard** — Sacked as Leader of the Lords

SIDEWAYS

- **Ann Taylor** — Leader of the House to Chief Whip
- **Margaret Beckett** — Trade Secretary to Leader of the House
- **Nick Brown** — Chief Whip to Agriculture

Africa arms report puts Cook in clear

Ian Black

ROBIN Cook, the Foreign Secretary, claimed total vindication this week over the arms-for-Africa affair after a Whitehall inquiry cleared ministers and blamed misjudgments by overworked officials for a breach of the United Nations embargo on Sierra Leone.

Launching a "sweeping programme" of reforms, that he pledged would give Britain "a modern Foreign Office", Mr Cook rebuffed criticism from the Conservative shadow spokesman, Michael Howard, who insisted that the FO was in a shambles and asked when Mr Cook planned to resign.

The report by Sir Thomas Legg catalogues the chain of mistakes and misunderstandings that allowed a British security firm, Sandline International, to illegally supply arms to the West African country.

But it does little more than blame "management and cultural factors" for what went wrong and is unlikely to produce more than a rebuke for Peter Penfold, the High Commissioner in Sierra Leone, who the report says exceeded his authority in contacts with Sandline.

Mr Cook welcomed its findings in a Commons statement, promising there would be "no scapegoats" and pledging that "this should be the end of the matter as far as officials are concerned".

The report concluded that "some officials became aware or had notice of the plan" to ship arms to Sierra Leone to aid President Ahmed Tejan Kabbah's bid to restore his government, ousted by a military coup.

Mr Penfold, forced into exile in Guinea with President Kabbah, was said to have given Sandline a degree of approval which he "had no authority to do". But Mr Penfold did not know the shipment would be illegal and "no other official gave any encouragement or approval."

Mr Howard maintained that the report was severely critical of ministers and officials. But Mr Cook insisted that Sir Thomas, and Sir Robin Ibbs who helped him to carry out the inquiry, had not uncovered any political scandal.

Tony Lloyd, the minister for Africa, criticised for his poor performance before a Commons committee, was said to be delighted that he had been exonerated.

Russian rage at UK visas

James Meek in Moscow

SUPERBLY organised, punctual — and rude. That's Britain as seen through the eyes of Russian travel agents, who have rated the British consulate in Moscow a dismal 28th out of 30 for its treatment of Russian tourists trying to get visas to travel abroad.

A survey of more than 150 tour firms in the Russian capital reveals deep resentment at the probing and personal questioning a percentage of visa applicants are subjected to by staff at the British embassy.

Had it not been for the hostile behaviour of the staff, said Valery Vlasov, director of the East European Institute for Social Technology and Tourism which carried out the survey, the British consulate would have been one of the highest rated. As it was, only Greece and Italy were more disliked.

He cited two female friends, planning to travel to Britain together, who were asked if they were lesbians. One interviewer, trying to judge how well-off a family was, asked a child if he slept in the same bed as his parents.

The friendliest European consulates were those of Denmark, Switzerland, Spain and France.

A hurt British embassy spokesman defended the work of the consulate. He said what Russians disliked most was being asked about their income, fearing that consular officials would betray them to the taxman.

Pilot's 'no go' over smoking

A BRITISH airline pilot was under investigation in Italy on Monday after refusing to let passengers leave his aircraft until one of them owned up to smoking in the lavatory, *writes John Hooper in Rome.*

A police spokesman at Malpensa airport in Milan said Brian Bliss, aged 57, risked being charged with kidnapping.

He was escorted from his aircraft by police officers last Sunday after keeping the 148 passengers in their seats for 40 minutes after landing.

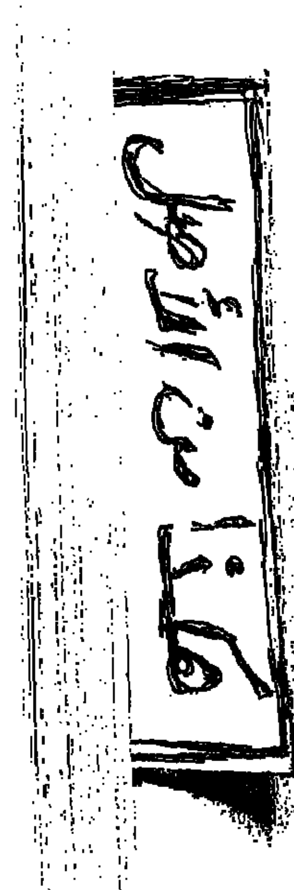
The incident took place at the end of a flight from Stansted airport operated by the low-cost British Airways subsidiary, Go.

"It was found that someone had had a cigarette in the front toilet and had tried to conceal the fact by blocking the smoke detector with bits of a cigarette packet," said a spokeswoman for the airline.

"This irresponsible act posed a risk to all 148 passengers and crew and Captain Bliss informed Italian police in advance."

She added: "Unfortunately, no one owned up to the smoking and eventually police came on board and detained him for detaining the passengers against their will."

She added that passengers had been generally supportive of the captain, who was later allowed to pilot the return flight to Stansted.



£100m for arts 'will stop the rot'

Dan Glaister

THE Culture Secretary, Chris Smith, last week delighted arts campaigners when he announced £100 million to enable all national museums and galleries to introduce universal free entry by 2001.

While entry to the Tate Gallery, the National Gallery and the British Museum is free, the Victoria & Albert Museum, the Natural History Museum and the Science Museum are among the institutions that currently charge visitors.

The move will be phased in over three years, with free access for children next year, for pensioners the following year, and for all by 2001.

Announcing the funding review, Mr Smith said: "This represents an exciting new beginning for the arts and cultural life of this country. It will give hundreds of thousands more people the chance to enjoy the best of artistic activity, to learn about our culture and to visit the great collections of our nation. It will give a real boost to organisations that are doing excellent work but have been struggling to survive over the last few years."

The extra money comes from the £290 million granted to the Department of Culture in the Comprehensive Spending Review announced last month. Additional funding sees £125 million go to the arts, to create stability, fund new productions and increase access, with above-inflation increases for the British Tourist Authority, the restoration of a £12 million cut to the National Heritage Memorial Fund, and additional funds to aid the restructuring of the UK Sports Council.

The new money for museum entry marks an evolution in government policy. Last November the Government seemed to have retreated from its pre-election pledge to maintain free entry to national museums and galleries.

It was, Mr Smith said, "a field in which enormous benefit could be achieved for a very large number of people at relatively low cost".

The "arts seminar" at 10 Downing Street at the end of June, attended by leading figures in the arts, some of them vocal in their criticisms of the Government, had also helped. "It became clear that the Prime Minister was of the opinion that the arts world was saying, if you give us more money, we will be very responsible about how we use it."

The review — hailed by one previous critic of government policy as "the most elaborate document about arts funding in living memory" — addresses structural problems within the cultural sector as well as handing out money.

There is an acknowledgment that much of the management within the sector has been poor, and that any new money should be granted only if there is an overhaul of many organisations. The Arts Council comes in for strong criticism in the review, and is to be merged with the Crafts Council.

A watchdog is to be established to oversee the areas under the remit of the Department of Culture, Media and Sport, charged with encouraging "good practice" and ensuring coherence.

The review is also critical of the confusion surrounding the administration of the film industry.

The British Film Institute announced its own restructuring, including 40 redundancies and the loss of several key functions, in an attempt to refocus activities and absorb a £500,000 cut in funding.

Although some leading figures in the arts cautioned that they wanted to see the fine print, most reflected that after years of feeling neglected by the Tories, the arts community should praise the Government for its spending commitments.

Theatre director Sir Peter Hall, who has been outspoken in his criticism of the Government, said Labour had stopped a 20-year rot. "Every pound put into the arts will earn its money back many times over, quite apart from the incalculable benefits to the quality of our lives and our children's. The sums involved are minute, the benefits are enormous."

● The English Tourist Board, the quango responsible for persuading Britons to stay at home for their holidays, is to be abolished.

Mr Smith wants more of its £12.7 million budget, mostly government grants, to go to independent regional tourist boards. At present nearly two-thirds goes on paying its staff and other operating costs.

Labour commits itself to promoting family life

Alan Travis

SECULAR baby-naming ceremonies at which families pledge their love and support for their newborn children will be offered to parents, whether they are married or not, as a key part of Home Secretary Jack Straw's plans to reverse the decline of family life in Britain.

The cabinet committee on the family is also close to agreeing measures to reinforce the institution of marriage, including scrapping "quickie" wedding licences, which allow couples to tie the knot within 24 hours.

As the latest official figures were published showing that the marriage rate has fallen to an all-time low of 279,000 weddings a year, Mr Straw said the Government was determined to ensure there is a growing future for family life in Britain.

He added that he had no intention of stigmatising other kinds of families, but the evidence suggested that two married parents most readily provided the stability which children need.

Ministers believe the new baby-naming ceremonies at register offices are a good way of enabling grandparents and the rest of the family to show support for the newborn child whether their parents are married or not. In some cases it might be the first time both sets of grandparents have even met.



The concept, pioneered by the Baby Naming Society, which was set up by the Labour peer Lord Young of Darlington, is seen as a secular answer to the decline in Church of England baptisms, from 365,000 in 1940 to 150,000 in 1995. It would allow the parents to pledge their commitment to the child's upbringing and announce its name.

To compensate for the post-war decline in the church's role in marriage and parenthood, Mr Straw intends to give state registrars an extended role in providing formal guidance and preparation before marriage.

In addition the Government is to give £2 million to fund a National Family and Parenting Institute, to be launched next April, which will support the growing voluntary movement of local parenting groups that offer advice to parents on bringing up children and run support schemes aimed at preventing the breakdown of relationships. A national helpline for parents is also on the way.

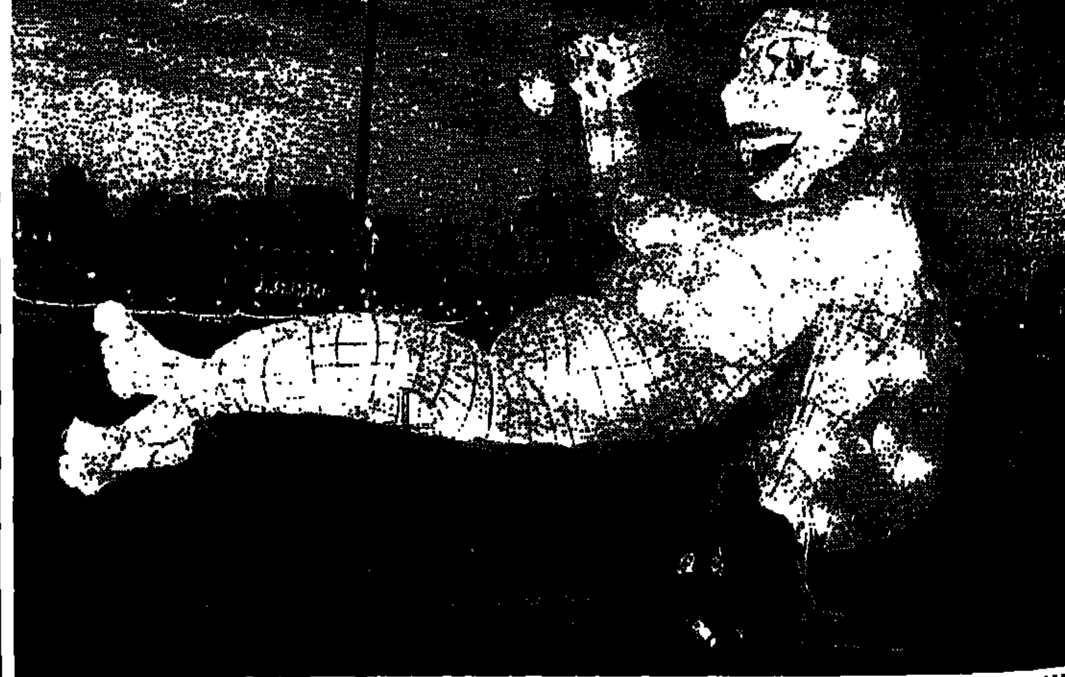
Mr Straw made clear that strengthening the institution of marriage as a basis for bringing up children was the cornerstone of Labour's modern family policy.

But in his speech on parenting, the Home Secretary made explicit the Government's belief that many couples who choose not to marry do provide a loving and stable environment for their children.

"We are not in the business of making the job of lone parents more difficult by blaming them as some have done in the past. I think I know the circumstances of lone parenthood only too well as my own mother brought five of us up single-handedly," Mr Straw told the parliamentary family and child protection group.

But he stressed there was a presumption that the stability that children needed was most readily provided by two participating parents, "while not stigmatising other family groupings".

Mr Straw said the Government's first emphasis was on combating family poverty by providing better financial support for families through a new Working Families Tax Credit and the New Deal for lone parents, which would come into effect in October.



The lady glows . . . A gigantic lantern made of tissue paper and willow, by the artists' collective JAMM will feature in the Thames Festival flotilla celebrating the river, on September 13 PHOTO: MARTIN GODWIN

Newspapers justified in paying criminals

Roy Greenslade

IN A landmark decision, the Press Complaints Commission last week rejected complaints against four newspapers for paying convicted criminals. The PCC argued that there was sufficient public interest to warrant publication.

It upheld the right of the Times to serialise the controversial book by Gitta Sereny about child killer Mary Bell; the Daily Telegraph for serialising a book by IRA informer Sean O'Callaghan; and the Mirror and the Express for their exclusive interviews with nurses Deborah Parry and Lucille McLauchlan, convicted of murdering a colleague in Saudi Arabia.

Its detailed eight-page adjudication on the three cases was based on a strict interpretation of the editors' code of conduct which outlaws payments to convicted criminals unless justified in the public interest. "It is wrong to glorify crime," noted the PCC, but "not necessarily to write about it.

"There will be occasions on which the public has a right to know about events relating to a crime or criminals. The key to the code is public interest."

In a separate move, the Home Office censured its civil servants for failing to tell ministers about the impending publication of the Bell book.

Hereditary cancer link discovered

SCIENTISTS have proved for the first time that exposure to radiation can increase cancer risk in the next generation, *writes Martin Wainwright*. Laboratory tests have isolated a mechanism which could explain child leukaemia clusters such as the one at Seascale, Cumbria, near the Sellafield nuclear plant.

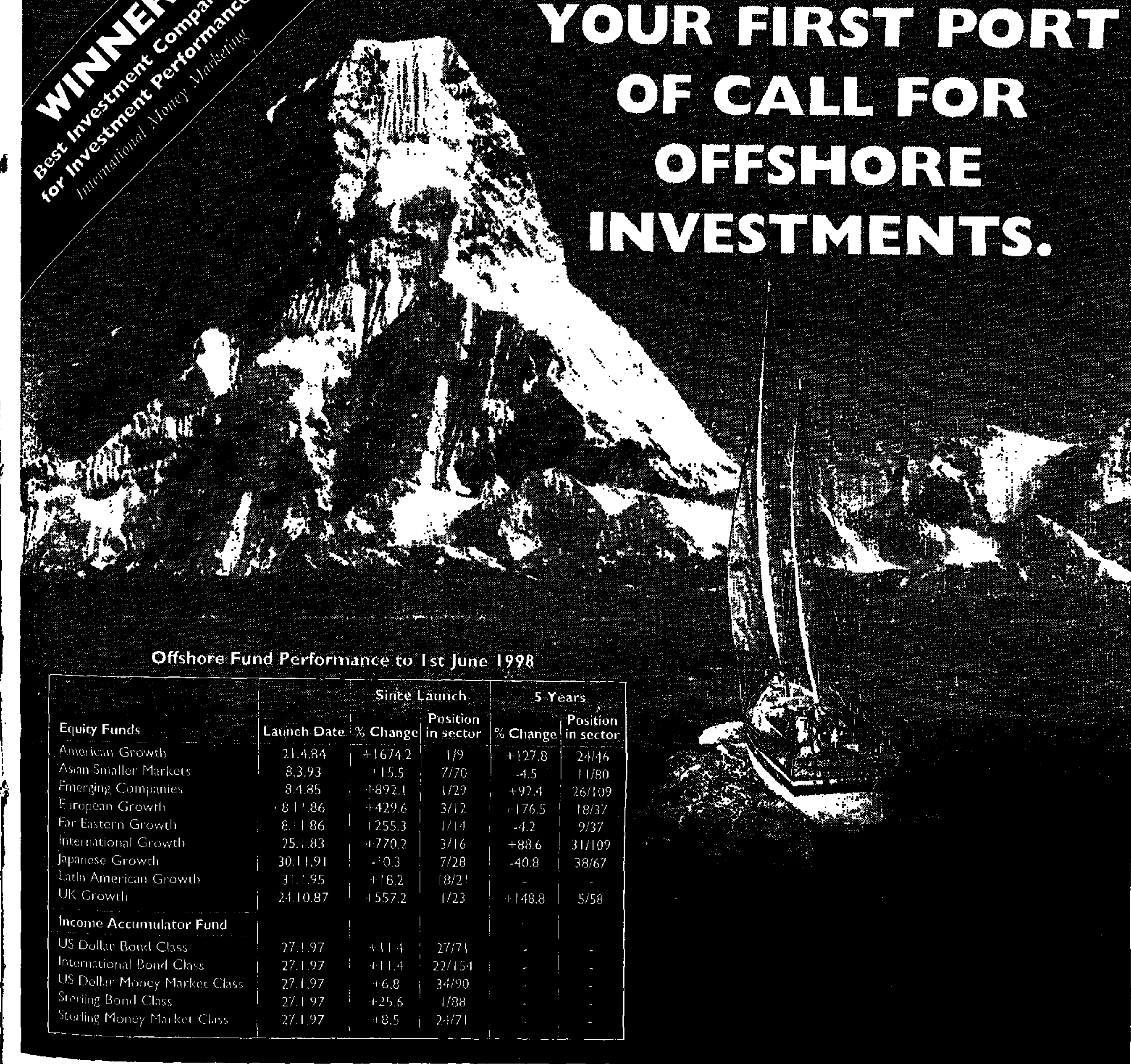
A team at the Paterson Institute for Cancer Research in Manchester has shown that sperm cells exposed to radiation can produce offspring vulnerable to a second "cancer attack". Inherited damage to bone marrow cells in mice left them more vulnerable to a second carcinogen.

"We cannot use this laboratory research definitely to explain . . . incidences of leukaemia in a non-lab environment," said Brian Lord, leader of the team and an expert on the effects of plutonium on the development of blood cells.

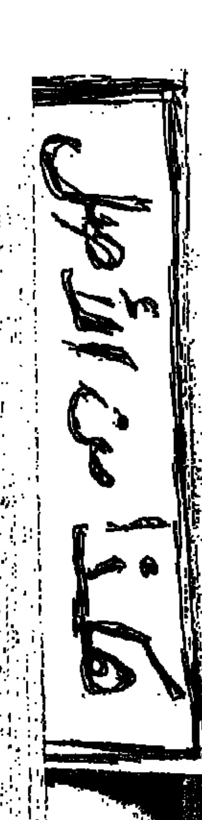
"But what it does show us, for the first time, is a potential way — a mechanism — in which paternal irradiation can lead to a leukaemia risk for the next generation. It shows us how DNA defects can be passed from generation to generation."

Previous attempts to find a link between Sellafield and the striking Seascale cluster in 1990 were widely criticised by other scientists because of data collection mistakes.

The Manchester team is cautious about translating the laboratory experiments into day-to-day life because of the highly-controlled lab environment.







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Blair gains as Brown loses

THE traditional ritual of post-reshuffle analysis dwells inevitably on winners and losers. The first wave of winners in Tony Blair's new line-up is obvious — Jack Cunningham, Alistair Darling, Stephen Byers, Margaret Jay. So are the immediate losers — Harriet Harman, David Clark, Gavin Strang, Ivor Richard and Frank Field. But there are some deeper victories and defeats hidden in the lists of who's in and who's out.

Tony Blair is the clearest winner of all, succeeding in the primary goal of any prime minister re-sorting his ministerial pack for the first time — namely, imposing his own stamp on his Cabinet. By the same token, the powerful Chancellor of the Exchequer, Gordon Brown, has lost out quite badly as he watches key allies removed and unfriendly newcomers moved in. But the Government itself could also suffer: its election-winning commitment to "reform welfare as we know it" has suffered a substantial blow.

Mr Blair has moved to make the Government his own. Perhaps alarmed by the degree of control exercised by his Chancellor, he wants a tighter grip. The creation of the new "enforcer" role is aimed at precisely this objective, bolstering the power of the prime minister and ensuring his will is done throughout Whitehall. The choice of Jack Cunningham is very canny. He has picked a man who was tipped — perhaps with insider blessing — for the chop a matter of weeks ago. His cause was championed neither by the farmers he had worked with at Agriculture, nor by Labour backbenchers, nor by the Brownites, and certainly not by the media. In other words, Dr Cunningham owes his elevation — and his salvation from political oblivion — solely to the Prime Minister. As such, he will have only one master; he can be relied upon to be absolutely loyal.

Mr Blair has reinforced his position yet further by three strikes against the Brown camp. He has shifted Nick Brown — so loyal to the Chancellor he even shares his name — out of the key Chief Whip's post to the less pivotal Agriculture department, so removing one of Gordon Brown's most valuable holds on the parliamentary party. By choosing the impeccably Blairite Stephen Byers, rather than the more ambidextrous Alan Milburn, as Chief Secretary to the Treasury, he has parachuted an ultra-loyalist into the Brownite citadel. The Chancellor will now be forgiven for seeing his official deputy as a virtual spy for the next-door neighbour. Finally, the rewarding of Peter Mandelson with a ministry of his own at Trade and Industry represents a mixed blessing for Mr Brown. On the one hand, he is doubtless relieved that the formerly portfolio-deprived one — with whom relations are arctic — is not in the "enforcer" job, with a licence to poke his nose into the inter-departmental business Mr Brown regards as his own. Still, he cannot be overjoyed that his rival is heading an economics department. Along with the Byers appointment, it means the Chancellor no longer has the economic show all to himself.

The one sour note from Mr Blair's viewpoint was Monday's walkout by Frank Field. Disappointed not to take over as social security supremo, nor to win any other cabinet post, the former minister for unthinkable thoughts chose the backbenches. His departure will send a message to the right-leaning press whose support this government covets so badly. They admired Mr Field and will interpret his exit as a sign that New Labour is no longer committed to taking the axe to welfare spending — once seen as the defining mission of this administration. With a firmer hold on his own Cabinet, Mr Blair will now have to prove that the mission goes on — even if the crew has changed.

Easing the plight of asylum seekers

BRITAIN used to boast of a proud tradition of providing a sanctuary for those fleeing from persecution: from Huguenots in the 17th century to Jews in the 20th century. Not only is Britain no longer proud to offer such sanctuary, within the past decade its procedures have been described by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees as the worst in Europe. Labour in opposition deserved credit for refusing to descend to the depths to which Michael Howard sank in playing the race card with his 1996 Asylum and Immigration Act — just three years after a 1993 Act had already shut most doors and turned thousands of airline staff into immigration officers by introducing fines on carriers for every person brought to Britain without proper papers. New Labour was right to review the entire procedure — a review which has produced important improvements. The trouble is that ministers have been far too apologetic.

There are advances on three important fronts. First, tens of thousands of applicants, left in limbo for years, are likely to have their residential status secured. Ministers shied away from calling this an amnesty, but that is what the new procedure essentially is. New criteria, under which unacceptable delay will be taken into account, will apply to 10,000 pre-1993 and 20,000 pre-1995 applicants. Quite right too. Second, due process is belatedly being introduced into the detention and vetting procedures, including statutory rules, written reasons for detention, and automatic bail hearings within seven days. Third, the notorious "white list" of countries, from which all applicants are presumed to be bogus, will be abolished.

What is wrong is the new system of financial support, which although put on a national basis, will be in kind rather than in cash. This might just be permissible if delays in handling cases can be cut to two months, but experience suggests this will not be achieved. Seeking vouchers for everything — from food to sanitary needs — for 12 months or more is unacceptably demeaning.

What was also wrong in this week's announcement was the reform-by-stealth under the cover of the ministerial re-shuffle. Unless ministers win the arguments, they will come back to haunt them. Let them go out and persuade the people. Instead of being apologetic, they should be proud to be protecting human rights.

Lords make a stand on sex

FOR an institution meant to be on its last legs, the House of Lords has a knack for making news. If it's not rows about Labour's plans for reform of the upper chamber, it's controversy over the choice of new peers to sit in it. The Lords have staged no fewer than 31 rebellions since Labour took office. Last month the Lordships forced a climbdown on tuition fees, but last week they proved their most meddlesome — rejecting the Crime and Disorder Bill because of an amendment reducing the age of consent for homosexuals to 16.

For progressives, this is not as clear-cut a dilemma as it looks. All egalitarians are anxious that sexual rights be the same for everyone, straight or gay. Indeed, the Guardian was an early champion of a reduction in the gay age of consent for that reason: anything less is discrimination, plain and simple. The notion of that move toward equality being held up by a body that is itself such a symbol of inequality — the unelected House of Lords — only adds to the dismay at the vote.

But there are a couple of complications. For one thing, it's hard to cast the Commons-Lords clash as a battle of the people's will versus an undemocratic relic: in this case, polls suggest it is the peers who are more in tune with majority opinion. One headline applauded the Lords for "speaking for the people". Nor are those who demand that the upper house and its objections simply be steamrollered out of the way wholly consistent. When the Conservatives were in government, these same critics often welcomed the Lords' obstinacy as a brake on the overmighty executive. Now Labour is being restrained — on an issue dear to progressives — they have lost their enthusiasm. But if the principle of checks and balances is sound, it must be sound always — even when it produces an unwanted outcome.

So what next? The Government does not want to lose its key crime bill, and parliamentary procedure allows it no way of forcing the legislation on a reluctant upper house. So Labour has decided that its best move is to drop the sensitive amendment, pass the Crime and Disorder Bill this week, and then reintroduce a specific sexual rights bill with Government blessing in the next session — launching it in the Commons, so that the Lords cannot block it indefinitely. Then Labour can get on with the urgent task of reforming the second chamber so it can act as a genuine balance to the Commons, but with the one feature it now lacks: democratic legitimacy.

Nuclear states setting an appaling example

Martin Woollacott

ON A sunny day in January, 1932, a single Japanese plane appeared over Shanghai. "And then, still utterly incredulous," an American journalist in the city wrote: "I saw an egg-shaped object detach itself from the plane and fall slowly in a slanting line towards the roof tops. An unfortified area of a great city, containing 600,000 people, was being bombed from the air!"

How hard it is to recapture the outrage of those days! How quaint that a war correspondent should think aerial bombing acceptable only if a city was fortified, or imagine that operations of war should consider the safety of civilians.

A mere 13 years separate the first Japanese bombing raids on Shanghai, with what now seem their puny packages of high explosives, from the US bombing of Hiroshima on August 6, 1945. Go on just another 10 years or so, and a young US naval officer was planning "a mission to destroy a relatively insignificant military target in eastern Europe . . . my bomb [small by modern standards] would have killed 600,000 human beings". The same figure that the American reporter used to underline his amazement at the moral effrontery of the Japanese was, not even a generation later, just a detail in a plan to kill millions.

Rear Admiral Eugene J Carroll Jnr, quoted in an illuminating collection of essays and documents called Hiroshima's Shadow (published by the Pamphleteers Press), was one of 60 retired senior officers from four nuclear powers who in 1996 signed a call for the abolition of nuclear weapons. As Lawrence Lifschultz, one of the book's editors, writes: "It had taken half a century but a major contingent of the world's nuclear officer corps . . . had arrived at the same position as the survivors of Hiroshima."

This year's Hiroshima anniversary comes after a summer in which threshold nuclear powers have become declared ones, new nuclear recruits are moving into the threshold zone, and the nuclear forces of at least one of the established nuclear states may well be less secure than they once were. Over the past few weeks the deputy US secretary of state, Strobe Talbot, has been visiting India and Pakistan in an attempt to persuade them to desist from further nuclear moves after the tests they both staged earlier in the year. Washington has abandoned most of the sanctions it had imposed on the two countries.

At the same time Iran has fired a missile that could reach Israel, Turkey, or Saudi Arabia. The weapon is one of a number it has acquired from North Korea. Estimates vary of the point at which Iran will have a viable missile technology of its own, as well as nuclear warheads to put on the missiles, but one US agency recently revised its forecasts downward. Iraq's efforts to acquire the bomb and other mass destruction weapons are well known.

Israel meanwhile has been testing nuclear-capable submarines, so that it will have a "second strike" capacity if an attack destroys its land-based nuclear missiles. Finally, Russia has embarked on military "reforms" that give more emphasis to its nuclear forces while, according to Western critics, failing to provide the funding to keep those forces under the strict safety controls that ought to prevail.

Hiroshima's Shadow was conceived in the wake of the shameful controversy over the Smithsonian Institution's plans for an exhibition to mark the 50th anniversary of the end of the second world war, an exhibition which was to have included part of the fuselage of the Enola Gay, the plane that dropped the Hiroshima bomb. When veterans organisations and air force pressure groups learned that the doubts on the necessity of dropping the bomb, which had troubled men such as General Eisenhower and Admiral William Leahy, were to be part of the exhibition, they were enraged.

They set out, as one opponent of the original exhibition said, to "put patriotism back into the Smithsonian". It was an extraordinarily successful act of censorship. Patriotism in this case meant that no doubt was to be cast on the myth that a nuclear attack or a very costly conventional invasion were the only alternatives before the Allies in 1945. Yet the more work is done by historians and other investigators of the events of 1945, the more this is shown to be untrue. An invasion could probably have been avoided, especially if the Japanese had been assured, earlier than they were, that the Emperor's position would not be threatened in the post-war political re-ordering of Japan. That they were not is due to an accident of history.

IF ROOSEVELT had not died, and if Truman had not then brought forward his friend and ally James Byrnes as secretary of state, Byrnes would not have been there to strike out the reassurance on the Imperial House that would have otherwise formed part of the Potsdam Declaration. The new secretary of state undoubtedly saw the bomb as a means of cowing the Russians, and felt that end would be more effectively served if it was actually used.

The decision to bomb was thus taken in a muddled and morally confused way. Hiroshima's Shadow shows how bad history and intellectually dishonest argument marched with nuclear weapons from the beginning. Whether they did prevent war for half a century, or whether the world was merely lucky, is another argument. But what is undeniable is that the muddle and fecklessness apparent in the early US and Allied decisions on the Bomb also characterised later nuclear choices by other countries. Fear drove some of those decisions — but also the idea that nuclear weapons would bring both status and leverage over other nations.

The same error is now being committed by countries such as India, Pakistan, Israel, Iran and Iraq. Their arguments about the reluctance of the established nuclear powers to disarm have force, and their fears about their own security are not groundless. But neither justify their taking their own peoples to the edge of the nuclear abyss. The lightness with which these decisions have been taken, by old and new nuclear powers alike, is truly appalling.

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Le Monde

Time to talk tough with the Taliban

EDITORIAL

IT WOULD be an understatement to say that there is an unmistakable whiff of *déjà vu* about the current situation in the Afghan capital, Kabul. The troops of the fundamentalist Islamic army, known as the Taliban, who have been in control of Kabul since 1996 have just expelled the members of non-governmental organisations who were attempting to ensure that humanitarian aid gets through to a population that is in dire need.

Afghanistan, a poor, land-locked and ill-organised country, remains terribly handicapped by a war that has been dragging on for two decades. The Taliban guerrillas have totally disregarded the Afghan people's yearning for peace, and assumed control despite the fact that they do not hold power throughout the country.

Neighbouring nations and other powers that have ideological ties to the Taliban are courting the regime. The Taliban leaders, who come from rural areas, believe in strong-arm tactics: they control every aspect of the community and outlaw anything that they interpret as hostile to their authority.

Within the space of a few months the Taliban have scrapped girls' education and banned literature and television. Those found guilty of a "crime" now have their hands and feet cut off. Those who stumble when reciting verses from the Koran are beaten.

The Taliban's latest exploit has been to stamp on the activities of foreign organisations whose task is to bring help to a population that sorely needs it. Afghans working hand in hand with such organisations are liable to dire punishment. The United Nations agencies are keeping an astonishingly low profile, given that some of their local agents have been murdered.

The whole episode is uncomfortably reminiscent of events in Southeast Asia in the 1970s — such as the decision by Pol Pot, in Phnom Penh in 1975, to liquidate those who wore glasses on the grounds that they were probably pro-Western.

In Kabul today, as in Cambodia 23 years ago, the real menace comes when totalitarianism is compounded by fanaticism — in this case the fanaticism of people who believe they can blithely disregard the reactions of the international community.

But times have changed. Even the *fatwa* issued against Salman Rushdie for his novel, The Satanic Verses, no longer enjoys the unanimous approval of the Iranians. It is far from certain that the Taliban have noticed that shift in attitude.

So the onus is now on those governments who in Rome have just adopted a global treaty aimed at punishing crimes against humanity, to make it as clear as possible to the Taliban leadership that for them the writing is on the wall.

The right to interfere in another country's domestic affairs is now beginning to take shape, and the country where that right most needs to be exercised is Afghanistan.

(July 22)



Fundamental difference . . . the Taliban have scrapped girls' education and banned literature and television PHOTO: SANTIAGO LYON

Government is fair game for Brussels

Sylvia Zappi

ON THE morning of July 18, tens of thousands of French hunters felt a tingle of triumphalism as they gathered to indulge in their favourite sport: shooting migratory birds. Legislation introduced by the French parliament on July 3 brought forward the start of the shooting season by six weeks, thus contravening the 1979 European directive on protected species.

The government, on the other hand, remains very concerned about the situation. As soon as the law was passed by the national assembly (only 20 of its 575 members voted against it, including six Greens and 11 Socialists), the prime minister, Lionel Jospin, who is convinced France cannot go on defying the European Commission, asked Jean-Marc Ayrault, president of the Socialist group in parliament, to look into ways of "guaranteeing" the practice of shooting in accordance with European legislation, as a way of backing up the consultation process initiated by the Green environment minister, Dominique Voynet.

The feeling in Brussels is that the time for talking is now over. Infuriated by the attitude of France — the Commission interpreted the July 3 law as a veritable slap in the face — the European authorities have decided to start legal proceedings. Six days after the vote in the French parliament, they sent a reasoned opinion to the French government (the second stage of the infringement procedures that precede a ruling by the European Court of Justice) regarding its failure to apply the European directive.

The Commission's complaint specifically referred to the opening and closing dates of the shooting season, which "do not make it possible to guarantee the total protection of certain species of wild birds during their return journey to their nesting sites as well as during their reproductive and nesting periods".

In addition, the Commission has also asked the Court to impose on France a daily penalty payment of $115,000 for its failure to apply the directive on protected bird species. This second move is designed to prevent the hunting of ortolan buntings — the order placing such birds on the endangered species list has not yet been signed by Jospin.

Both the environment ministry and the prime minister's office agree that the only way out of the woods is to implement the compromise that was reached before the July 3 law came into force.

But time is running out: the four-month extension which environmental associations decided to grant the government to give it time to implement shooting legislation in compliance with the European directive will run out at the end of October.

At that point complaints will be lodged with administrative tribunals and the Council of State. If judicial precedent is anything to go by, the government is virtually certain to be given a bloody nose.

(July 19-20)

Assad offers to help salvage peace process

Mouna Naïm

THE two-day state visit to France by the Syrian president, Hafez Assad, which ended on July 18, was by no means unproductive. His French hosts could hardly have been expected to move mountains within the space of 48 hours. But they were able to put across a number of strong messages, notably concerning Lebanon and the respect of human rights. Only time will tell whether Syria is prepared to heed them or not.

By the end of his visit Assad had already given some ground on two issues: he took on board the Franco-Egyptian idea of organising a multinational conference to try to salvage the Middle East peace process; he also accepted that he needed to respond officially to the French demand that French magistrates be allowed to question the Nazi war criminal, Alois Brunner, who is thought to be living in Syria.

After a second round of talks with the French president, Jacques Chirac, Assad did not rule out the possibility of Syria's taking part in a peace conference "when circumstances allow", as long as any such conference were "in line with [Syria's] basic demands".

"So far the project has not really taken shape," he added — a point which is readily accepted on the French side.

Both the form and content of Assad's public announcement that he was prepared to back such an initiative came as a pleasant surprise. The programme of his visit had not anticipated any such public statement. Indeed, until the evening of July 16 the Syrians were still reluctant to commit themselves.

Assad . . . ready to compromise

The Syrian foreign minister, Farouk al-Shara, said he was afraid it might mean jettisoning the terms of reference of the peace process launched in Madrid in 1991, and more particularly the principle of exchanging land for peace. He also said he was worried about offering Israel a forum in which Binyamin Netanyahu's government would be able to scuttle any peace initiative.

It was only after two sessions of talks between Assad and Chirac, two more between Al-Shara and his French opposite number, Hubert Védrine, and a private four-way conversation between the two presidents, Al-Shara and the French prime minister, Lionel Jospin, on the evening of July 16 that the Syrians' misgivings were satisfied.

The French promised that none of the basic principles underpinning the current peace process would be called into question. On the contrary, the aim of the conference would be to remind all parties of those principles. Nothing would be organised without the co-operation of the United States, which had originally brokered the peace process.

It was only after Chirac had twice brought up the issue of Brunner that Assad promised he would examine the French investigating magistrate's request. He repeated that Adolf Eichmann's former right-hand-man was not living in Syria.

Chirac said he was delighted at Syria's recent release of 370 political prisoners, 250 of them Syrian and 120 Lebanese, and he urged his guest to continue the process of liberalising political life in his country.

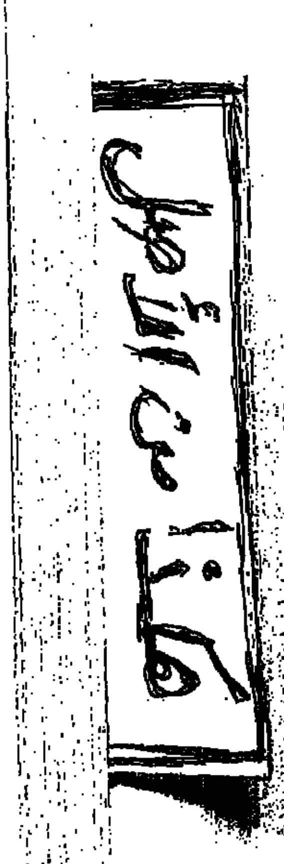
Jospin reminded Assad that the association agreement with the European Union — the negotiation of which has involved Syria — and the partnership provided for by the so-called Barcelona Euro-Mediterranean process hinged on three key factors: economic strength, democratic openness, and the respect of human rights. Védrine gave Al-Shara a list of the names of Lebanese and Syrians who have been jailed for their opinions, and whose cases are being followed with particular interest by the French authorities.

Chirac made it clear he is particularly concerned about the unity and sovereignty of Lebanon. While he stressed, as did Assad, that Israel should respect the United Nations Security Council resolution 425, which for the past 20 years has called for the withdrawal of Israeli troops from southern Lebanon, he also referred to the domestic Lebanese situation.

While noting that there had been progress, notably with regard to the organisation of recent municipal elections, Chirac told Assad he was keen for the electoral calendar to be respected and for Lebanese institutions to be allowed to function normally. Given the forthcoming presidential election this autumn in Lebanon, a country where Syria has the whip hand, his message could not have been clearer.

Assad will have noted that the French president and the Socialist government speak with one voice when it comes to Middle East policies. The most welcome surprise for him must have been the realisation that the Socialists, traditionally regarded as favourable to Israel, backed the restoration of "Syria's full sovereignty over the Golan Heights", as Jospin put it, and the unconditional withdrawal of Israeli troops from southern Lebanon.

(July 19-20)



Declan Donnellan has taken a great risk in putting on Le Cid at the Avignon Festival. **Brigitte Salino** meets the director and **Jean-Louis Perrier** reviews the play

A joyous love affair with the classics

DECLAN DONNELLAN, the highly regarded head of Cheek by Jowl, one of Britain's best independent theatre companies, always insists on natural lighting and a wooden floor when he is rehearsing. The daylight enables him to get a better idea of how his actors' facial expressions change, and the wooden floor means that the very physical approach to acting that he requires is not jeopardised by the presence of a hard concrete surface.

When he started working on Le Cid in Paris, it took him a long time to find a suitable place for rehearsals. In the end he chose the theatre in the Maison de la Belgique at the Cité Internationale Universitaire, a rather remote, old-fashioned venue overlooking some trees — and with a waxed parquet floor.

Sitting at a table where the actors had been drinking coffee after a rehearsal, Donnellan apologised for the fact that he had to drink wine out of a bowl because there were no glasses. "It makes me look like an Irish drunk," he said. A ginger-haired, bright-eyed man from an Irish background, Donnellan is someone who laughs a lot, particularly at himself.

His production opens with the Sixth Commandment: "Thou shalt not kill." "It's because Rodrigue kills too much. He starts by killing the Count, then he kills the Moors. He becomes a serial killer. The same thing happens in Le Cid as in Hamlet, where the ghost of Hamlet's father could have said: Claudius murdered me, but you must forgive him. Both fathers say: you won't forgive, you'll kill. Why? Corneille poses a lot of questions without coming up with the answers. It's up to the audience to ask themselves questions and judge, not the characters but their crimes. For crimes exist.

"We all have the urge to kill. There are policemen in our heads. We have instincts, some of them destructive, others creative. We live in a world of choices — that's where our responsibility comes in. You have to settle conflicts the minute they crop up."

Donnellan was once a lawyer — but for only one day. After reading law for five years, he dropped everything on the very evening of his graduation. "My clients were lucky I didn't practise, I promise you," he said putting his hand on his heart and laughing. He does not know why he read law: "Perhaps because I didn't have connections in the theatre. But I told myself I should do what I wanted to do."

When he was a student at Cambridge Donnellan did a lot of acting as an amateur. In 1981, when he was 28, he founded his own company, Cheek by Jowl. Since then, the company has put on productions at some 300 venues all over the world, from Kathmandu and Rio de Janeiro to Aberdeen and Haifa.

It was the touring, not Britain's mingy theatre subsidies, that enabled the company to survive and Donnellan to build up his reputation. He has been associate director of London's National Theatre since 1989 and he is still fired by his original obsession: to explore the classical repertoire.

"I was lucky enough to have been taught by people who adored Corneille and Racine. They succeeded in proving to us that Alexandrines were not a hindrance. They explained that the restrictions were no more than a convention. They said we needn't approach theatrical masterpieces as though they were morality plays.

"It was almost a negative approach, but as it turned out it worked very well. They asked us to approach the classics with the same respect we gave our contemporaries — a respect due to living things, not something out of a museum.

"The way they taught me to approach the classics gave me strength in my work as a director. I'm able to tell actors who are scared to tackle well-known plays that they have nothing to fear. With a little technique, doors open. It's important not to pretend to believe in a list of strict rules that are known only to initiates."

That strength prompted Donnellan to break a taboo: to put on Le Cid in Britain — "something that had never been done before". Corneille used to be regarded as untranslatable. The play, which opened in London in 1986, was a success. Earlier, in 1984, Donnellan had put on Jean Racine's Andromaque. Other classics followed — Calderon's The Doctor Of Honour in 1989, Lessing's Miss Sara Sampson in 1990 and Alfred de Musset's On Ne Badine Pas Avec L'Amour in 1993.



Donnellan: 'I feel at home in the 17th century' PHOTO HENRIETTA BUTLER

"It's true that those playwrights are untranslatable. But just think of all the wonderful stories that were never staged, because of snobbery or fear. In the case of Corneille or Racine, something does of course remain after translation, even if the luminosity of French and the transparency of the Alexandrine verse are lost."

There had of course to be an exception in Donnellan's career, which is dominated by Shakespeare (with no fewer than 12 productions): after reading the opening scene of Tony Kushner's Angels In America, he decided to put on the play. New York reviewers pointed out how lucky the playwright was: he had in the process become a classic.

"That was the only time I stepped out of the 17th century. I feel at home in that century and in its attitudes, where the important issues are spirituality, sex, politics, the role of the state, and poetry."

When the director of the Avignon Festival, Bernard Faivre d'Arcier, saw Donnellan's 1995 production of As You Like It at the Bouffes du Nord in Paris, he invited him to Avignon. He assumed Donnellan would put on a Shakespeare play. But Donnellan had just staged A Winter's Tale, in Russian, at the Maly Theatre in St Petersburg, and suggested Le Cid instead.

"It would be tricky to put that on in Avignon," Faivre d'Arcier said.

"Why?" Donnellan asked.

"Well, you know, Jean Vilar, Gérard Philipe and all that . . ."

"But I wasn't even born then!"

So they went ahead with Le Cid. Donnellan preferred the Théâtre Municipal to Avignon's vast Cour d'Honneur. "In the 17th century, all the major theatres, including the Globe, were small. You need a human scale for Corneille to be heard properly."

(July 10)

Corneille with a sharp wit

JEAN VILAR'S legendary 1951 production of Pierre Corneille's Le Cid, with Gérard Philipe, did so much to enhance the reputation of the Avignon Festival that no one dared to put the play on there again for two generations, *writes Jean-Louis Perrier*

The much-acclaimed version shown at Avignon in mid-July is very much of our age, which tends to be wary of providential characters: the British director Declan Donnellan has unceremoniously yanked Rodrigue (Le Cid) out of his century (17th) and into ours. Philipe's passionate conception of heroism has been abandoned without compunction. This production is all about life in the barracks, generals eating, ladies plotting and sentries doing their rounds.

But Donnellan has not deconstructed Le Cid. On the contrary, he has followed the text to the letter. But what he has also done is tip Corneille's constantly alternating dialectics in one direction only — one that has remained largely unexplored: he makes his characters live dangerously. As a result, the familiar lines we all learned at school take on a new force and a quite different melodiousness.

Donnellan plays cat and mouse with Corneille. In scenes where the traditionally played Rodrigue would feign modesty in order to arrive at his ends, Donnellan makes him genuinely modest so he can try to shirk what he has to do. William Nadylam plays Rodrigue as a man who clicks his heels as he stands rigidly to attention before his father and his king and is gripped by a mixture of fear and disgust at the idea of fighting.

He experiences at first hand the contradiction between a lust for life and submission to the urge to kill. He also happens to be very Catholic, and spends a long time praying over the body of Count de Gormas, whom he has just killed in a duel.

And when Rodrigue returns, a reluctant hero, from the battle against the Moors, his pained and solemn account of the event shows that he is distraught at having killed people, that his victory was in fact a defeat, and that he feels he has been irremediably sullied. He becomes Cid ("Lord") by default.

Donnellan offers all sorts of different approaches to the play. The most striking is no doubt his representation of Chimène (Sarah Karbasnikoff), Rodrigue's betrothed, as a blonde bombshell. A lecherous flirt who is spanked by her governess when she makes a nuisance of herself in a very short nightie, Chimène gradually comes to dominate the play.

Four years after Le Cid was first staged, Corneille thought it would be more accurate to call his play a tragedy rather than a tragi-comedy, as he had originally done. In Donnellan's witty reworking, the work again fully qualifies as a tragi-comedy.

(July 14)

Thumping shame

Renaud Machart in Lenox

ON JULY 17 a huge audience was expected to attend the major event of this year's Tanglewood Festival in Lenox, Massachusetts: the return to the concert platform of the celebrated pianist Van Cliburn, 30 years after his last performance with the Boston Symphony Orchestra.

The expectancy surrounding the occasion was all the greater because a thunderstorm was gathering (the concert was to be held in the Shed, a kind of hangar half-open to the elements) and because Van Cliburn was rumoured to be nervous.

Van Cliburn, a tall, slim man in white tails, did indeed look nervous as he walked on to the platform. The first movement of Sergei Rachmaninov's Second Piano Concerto began with its gradual crescendo of slow chords played by the piano alone. This was followed by the celebrated opening tune, backed by a groundswell of arpeggios on the piano, which Van Cliburn played very slowly.

Rachmaninov's own recording of the concerto suggests that this section should be played at a brisker tempo. Soon the reason for such a sluggish beginning became clear Van Cliburn's fingers had seized up He was thumping; his body seemed tense and his elbows were tucked in against his sides. It was as if the legendary pianist who won the Moscow Tchaikovsky Competition in 1958 at the age of 23 had returned with stony steps to the scene of his great achievement. Rachmaninov's tender and sinuous Adagio sostenuto was even more wooden.

Matters did not improve with the last movement. The quicksilver runs and bounding chords fell deplorably flat. Although both the pianist and the work were pale reflections of their real selves, the audience gave the performance a wildly rapturous reception.

A few days earlier the British pianist Stephen Hough gave a recital before a rather sparse audience at the Ozawa Hall. Despite the rather fuzzy acoustics, he managed to make his instrument sing. The mellowness of his touch did not interfere with the great precision of his playing.

Hough's performance of Federico Mompou's Charms (he has recorded a superb version of the work for Hyperion) possessed an appealingly melancholic clarity of tone. In Liszt's Sonata, we were reminded that Hough possesses an electric keyboard technique, treating the work, the ultimate test of a pianist's virtuosity, almost playfully.

The pleasure of Hough's recital was enhanced by a delicious smell of freshly mown grass that began to waft in from outside during the Mompou pieces. The composer Francis Poulenc would surely have loved to have been present. He once said, with reference to the closing bars of one of his songs, that he wanted to give the impression that he was "bringing the evening air into a concert hall".

(July 19-20)

Le Monde

Directeur: Jean-Marie Colombani

Fantasist Who Brought Fear to the Capitol

David Von Drehle, Tom Kenworthy and Jon Jeter

HE HAD very little to call his own — an old red Chevy pickup, a modest monthly government disability check — but his mind was full of grandeur. He burned with gold fever, and spent hot summer days squatting beside chill Montana streams panning for his fortune. He bragged of his ties to the Kennedys, and later complained that his friend Bill Clinton had betrayed him.

He was drawn, in some terrible way, to the grandest building of Washington, the white marble Capitol that rises over the Mall like an ecstatic vision of power. There, Russell Eugene "Rusty" Weston Jr. burst through a public entrance on Friday afternoon last week and killed two Capitol policemen before he fell, wounded four times. One bystander was wounded as well.

Weston, 41, had few friends, but plenty of people knew him, or knew of him. To his neighbors in the Montana mountains and the Illinois corn country, he was the man who shouted at satellite dishes, believing that they were being used to spy on him.

Doctors at the state hospital in Warm Springs, Montana, knew him. He spent 52 days there in 1996, committed involuntarily after a confrontation with police. He was released when they decided he posed no threat to anyone.

Westons have lived for four generations around Valmeyer, Illinois, the neighbors say. In interviews last weekend, the family was described as quiet and reclusive, and also churchgoing and well regarded.

In the summer of 1993, the waters of the Mississippi rose about as high as any Weston had ever seen them. Towns and cities from Minnesota to Louisiana battled to stem the flood. Valmeyer lost its fight. When the waters receded and the damage was surveyed, local leaders and federal officials agreed the town would need to be entirely rebuilt on higher ground.

Weston helped his father, a retired railroad worker, rebuild the family place. Russell Weston Sr. lives with his mother in two adjacent single-story brick homes about six miles north of town.

As the younger Weston worked on the houses, he cut a memorable figure, neighbors said, wearing a helmet that resembled something a firefighter would use. He complained repeatedly that a satellite dish in a neighbor's yard was spying on him, the neighbors remember. Sometimes he would wave wildly at the device, yelling "Here I am!"

Weston (right) complained that the area around his log cabin in Rimini, a declining mining village in the hills of Montana, had been seeded with landmines by government agents

Rimini, Montana, lies in the shadow of Red Mountain. It was a mining town, one of scores that sprang up after gold was discovered in Helena in 1864. Rimini turned out to be rich with silver, instead, and by the late 19th century it was home to 3,000 people and shipped its ore as far as Wales. Then the mines went bust and locals discovered that Helena, 20 miles to the northwest, had acquired the local water rights and that was the end of Rimini.

For all intents and purposes, anyway. About 30 people still live there, people who like the solitude and tend not to like authority. The great communal passion is the ongoing water litigation against Helena. "Most people up here like to be left alone," said Roger Siewert, 54, a self-employed contractor.

Just down the road from Siewert's house, on the east bank of Ten Mile Creek adjacent to the Helena National Forest, is a piece of property valued by the tax collector at $1,265 plus $400 worth of improvements. This land, with its serviceable but modest 16-by-20-foot, one-room log cabin, was purchased by Rusty Weston's sister April about six years ago. When Weston returned to Montana after the flood, this was his home.

"If he was on his medication, he was fine," said Ken Moore, a 76-year-old retired carpenter and neighbor. "If he went off his medication, he went off the deep end."

Now and then, though, neighbors were concerned enough to call the police and report that Weston was off his medicine. In October, 1996, he was taken before a district court judge who ordered him committed to the state hospital in Warm Springs. According to Andrew Malcolm, press secretary to Montana Gov. Marc Racicot, Weston was delivered to the hospital on October 11, 1996, and was given an "immediate and intense evaluation." That was followed by "an involuntary program of treatment," which, in the case of schizophrenics, includes drugs to adjust brain chemistry.

On December 2, after 52 days in the hospital, "the medical staff deemed [Weston] no longer a threat to himself or others," Malcolm said. At that point, "there was no legal ability or reason to hold him."

The day before the bloodshed in the Capitol, Weston was back in Valmeyer, his father told the Miami Herald. He came and went often from Valmeyer, his father said; this most recent trip home had lasted "a month, or a month and a half."

His father's brief comments paint the picture of a man adrift, here six weeks, gone a month or two. Weston had been to Washington once, his father said, returning with a stack of newspapers and other documents. He told his dad he had applied for a job at the CIA.

He complained that his home in Rimini had been seeded with landmines by the government. The father ordered the son out of the house. Apparently he paused long enough to grab his dad's .38-caliber Smith & Wesson. He evidently climbed into his 1983 Chevrolet S-10 pickup and drove the 755 miles from Valmeyer to Washington. He must have driven long and hard, because he had reached the Capitol in one day.

His life may have been saved by a U.S. Senator. Sen. Bill Frist, R-Tennessee, is a heart surgeon and trauma specialist and had rushed to the shooting scene in time to conclude that Officer Jacob J. Chestnut of the Capitol Police was going to die. Frist then spotted another man with red hair and a gaunt appearance and went to help Weston.

Surgeons at District of Columbia General Hospital battled through the night to save Weston's life.

China's Army Told to Give Up Business

John Pomfret in Beijing

CHINA'S President Jiang Zemin ordered the People's Liberation Army to end its decades-old flirtation with capitalism and relinquish its massive network of commercial enterprises, which include everything from refrigerator manufacturing to golf courses and karaoke halls, the state-run press reported last week.

Jiang's order came at a meeting of senior military leaders called as part of China's campaign to fight rampant smuggling, which is estimated to cost the government at least $12 billion a year. Last month, the Communist Party's mouthpiece, the People's Daily, accused the army and the People's Armed Police, China's biggest uniformed internal security apparatus, of involvement in smuggling and warned them to end the illegal practices.

Jiang's move is part of a series of significant revisions designed to shake up the army and transform the way it operates. China's leadership has been trying since 1993, with limited success, to get the army out of the business of making money and back into the business of defending China.

While it is unclear whether this latest attempt will work, Jiang's order is the most serious effort so far to deal with a problem that is said to be a key impediment to the army's desire to become a regional and, ultimately, a global power. Western military officers have said for years that the army's money-making efforts have affected its ability to focus on its stated goal of professionalizing and improving the 2.3 million-strong military force.

The army's involvement in business has been one of the more remarkable byproducts of two decades of economic reforms. Experts on China's military estimate that the army owns about 15,000 enterprises that generate perhaps $10 billion a year. Among the businesses are a tourist cruise line on the Yangtze River, three of China's professional basketball teams, an airline, textile and pharmaceutical manufacturers, discotheques, restaurants and hotels such as the luxurious Palace Hotel in central Beijing.

Jiang made his order during an anti-smuggling conference held at army headquarters in Beijing. Among the participants, the New China News Agency said, were all of the uniformed members of the Central Military Commission, China's most powerful military body, which Jiang chairs.

Army-run businesses can easily engage in smuggling because their trucks do not pay tolls and are not subject to police inspections. Smuggling hurts China's economy, affecting, among other things, the price of oil — which slipped about $35 a ton since January because of smuggling — and of cars, Chinese press reports have said.

Jiang's order appeared to be aimed at military firms that produce goods that have nothing to do with fighting wars. Weapons manufacturers belonging to the army reportedly are to be exempted from his ruling.

Jury Orders Klan to Pay $38 Million

William Claiborne

A SOUTH CAROLINA jury last week ordered two Ku Klux Klan chapters and five Klansmen to pay $37.8 million for creating an atmosphere of hate that led to the torching of a black church in 1995.

The verdict exceeded by more than $10 million the amount of damages sought by the Macedonia Baptist Church in Manning, South Carolina. It represented the largest civil award for damages in a hate crime case.

"The verdict shows there are still some things sacred in this country, still some lines that no one can cross," said Morris Dees, co-founder of the Southern Poverty Law Center, who argued the case for the church.

Three of the Klansmen held liable are serving prison sentences for the church burning, and the lawyer for Horace King, the 65-year-old grand dragon of the North Carolina-based Christian Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, said his client is a poor chicken farmer living on disability payments. Another defendant, Virgil Griffin, an imperial wizard of the South Carolina Klan chapter, also was reported unable to substantially meet the verdict.

Two of the men in prison for the Macedonia Baptist Church fire implicated the Klan during the week-long trial, with Timothy Adron Welch testifying, "The church fire was Klan business, and we were told we would not go to jail."

King, even after being confronted in court with a videotape showing him in robes, exhorting whites to take back their country from blacks, testified he "never told anyone to go out there and fight blacks."

His lawyer, Gary White, said the men who were convicted of setting the fire acted on their own and "this whole suit is about shutting down the Ku Klux Klan."

At least 32 suspicious fires were reported at black churches between January 1995 and June 1996, the largest number in South Carolina. Although at the time there were reports of Klan links to some of the fires and occasional arrests of whites with ties to racist groups, federal investigators were unable to find any pattern of organized Klan involvement.

Japan Grows Weary Of Its Ruling Party

Kevin Sullivan in Tokyo

LAST MONTH, angry Japanese voters ran down the ruling Liberal Democratic Party like a steam locomotive, claiming the head of Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto and demanding that the party change course.

Last week the Liberal Democrats formally answered the voters by duly electing the likable party veteran who was next in line on the seniority ladder as their new leader and presumptive successor as prime minister.

Whether the mild-mannered foreign minister, Keizo Obuchi, 61, will become an effective national leader remains an open question. But his selection suggests that there is a widening gap between the views of the Japanese public and the party that has essentially run life in this country for more than 40 years.

"I guess our voices didn't reach the LDP; it's the same old stuff," said Yoshio Ikeda, 35, a self-employed worker in Tokyo.

Ichita Yamamoto, 40, a Liberal Democratic lawmaker from Obuchi's home region of Gunma, said he was "wondering if Japan made the right decision" by choosing Obuchi when what the nation wants is "a leader like Tony Blair."

The increasingly different prisms through which the Japanese people and the party that governs them view the world may not result in any grand changes. Japan is resistant to change in general, and the party has proven its resiliency through the decades.

But with Japan facing economic disease that threatens to infect the global economy, and with the normally docile Japanese public showing an increasing awareness of its power to change things, the different cadences of the Liberal Democratic Party and the public could eventually lead to a stumble.

Hashimoto was the third Asian leader to fall amid the financial crisis sweeping the region (the others were in Indonesia and Thailand). Analysts say Obuchi, who will inherit a party at the nadir of its public popularity, could easily be next if he does not satisfy the Japanese public that its voice is being heard.

In the July 12 election, the Liberal Democrats did not win one seat in the upper house from five of Japan's six biggest cities, where more than a third of the nation's 125 million people live. Urban voters, younger voters, women and even older people who have supported the party for years punished the Liberal Democrats at the polls. The party responded with an unprecedented public campaign for party president in which three candidates appealed to the disaffected voters. Then last week, it took less than an hour to choose the candidate who had been groomed and selected by the party's back-room power brokers.

Uncharacteristically, the Japanese public had responded to fear and uncertainty about the economy not by retreating to the familiarity of the party that engineered Japan's rise to economic greatness, but by stepping boldly in a new direction and demanding change. The big winner in the election was the infant Democratic Party of Japan and its leader, Naoto Kan.



Businessmen line up to buy lottery tickets in Tokyo's élite Ginza district PHOTOGRAPH: TOSHIYUKI [illegible]

In turn, the ruling party last week clung to the gentle familiarity of Obuchi rather than choosing the more reform-minded candidates he defeated, Seiroku Kajiyama and the health minister Junichiro Koizumi.

"Whoever becomes the new president, it is meaningless if the LDP does not change," said Kunio Hatoyama, an official in the Democratic Party of Japan. "The defeat [on July 12] was not a denial of the Hashimoto cabinet, but a denial of the whole LDP type of politics."

Veteran Liberal Democratic legislator Masaaki Nakayama, 65, disagreed. He said that public popularity should not play too great a role in selecting a new prime minister. He said the party has a responsibility to weigh the various candidates and select a new national leader, paying more attention to their qualifications than to the "instinct" of the public.

Obuchi spoke torrents of words last week suggesting that he understands voters are looking for better than business as usual. He has promised to pursue an aggressive program of economic reforms, cutting taxes and providing a budget to stimulate the economy.

But in dozens of interviews on the streets of Tokyo, voters almost uniformly say they are looking for something new from their leaders. A remarkable number of people have said they want a leader such as Makiko Tanaka, 54, a Liberal Democratic lawmaker and daughter of the late prime minister Kakuei Tanaka.

Tanaka was a key factor in forcing the party to delay its presidential election from Tuesday until Friday to force candidates to discuss their positions fully and publicly.

In Brief

INDEPENDENT counsel Kenneth W. Starr has served a subpoena on President Clinton that requires his testimony in the Monica S. Lewinsky investigation as early as this week.

The issuance of a subpoena — the first time a president has been subpoenaed to testify before a grand jury — marks a dramatic escalation in Starr's confrontation with Clinton, and presents the president with both a political and legal dilemma. The prospect of being seen defying a subpoena for his testimony is not a politically appealing one for a sitting president.

And while Clinton would retain the right of all those called before the grand jury to invoke his rights against self-incrimination, that is perhaps an even less politically palatable option.

However, the subpoena could be withdrawn if the president were to agree to provide testimony in a different setting and Starr were to accept that offer.

AFTER months of caginess and flip-flopping, Argentine President Carlos Menem has rescinded his controversial decision to seek a third term next year, thus averting a political crisis and a schism in his ruling Peronist party.

Last month Menem announced plans to seek a third term and called for a change in the constitution that would permit him to do so. But the proposal proved wildly unpopular with many Argentines and with a faction of his own party led by Eduardo Duhalde, the powerful governor of Buenos Aires province, who has long been considered Menem's rightful heir.

Bowing to the pressure, Menem told Peronist governors, legislators and cabinet ministers that he "will leave office unfailingly on December 10, 1999."

Menem was elected in 1989 and again in 1995 after the constitution was changed to permit a second term. He was forbidden at the time from seeking a third consecutive term but had planned to appeal to the Supreme Court to overturn that portion of the charter.

MICHAEL McCurry, whose genial barbs and skillful spinning of reporters helped steer President Clinton through 3¼ years of often hostile media fire, announced that he will step down this fall as White House press secretary.

Credited with repairing frayed relations with the news media, McCurry was on the front lines for Clinton on nearly every major battle from budget wars to campaign finance improprieties.

Clinton made a rare appearance in the White House briefing room to announce the move and named deputy press secretary Joseph Lockhart as McCurry's replacement. McCurry plans to leave in October.

Nigerians Tell of Appalling Prison Regime

Karl Vick in Lagos

NIGERIA'S democracy movement is only just regaining its health, both figuratively and literally. Politicians released recently after months and even years in prison have spent their first weeks of freedom juggling public questions about how the country will be governed with such personal questions as how to kill the new life forms that flower on your body after months sleeping on a damp concrete floor.

"By the time I got out, from my head to the soles of my feet — fungal infection," said Abraham Adesanya, deputy chairman of the National Democratic Coalition, a leading opposition group. The 75-year-old lawyer spent four months in a police cell. "The medicine to treat it cost $300. I had to buy it myself."

The death of Moshood Abiola last month after four years in detention brought international attention to what Nigerians themselves have seldom paid much mind — the appalling conditions of the country's prisons.

Abiola, imprisoned for claiming the presidency he apparently had won in 1993 before the military regime annulled the election, died at age 60 of an apparent heart attack. An autopsy by foreign doctors suggested it was brought on by high blood pressure that went untreated because prisoners in Nigeria are denied even basic medical care.

Interviews with activists who survived their own incarceration underscore other things prisons here lack: toilets, food and even the most rudimentary accountability.

"I have met inmates who have been waiting 10 and 15 years for their trial; some of them can't remember what they did," said Olawale Fapohunda of the Civil Liberties Organization, a leading human rights group here.

Through the newsletter PrisonWatch, Fapohunda has chronicled horrors that amplify complaints Abiola chronicled in prison diaries being published piecemeal in the Concord, the Lagos newspaper he owned. The millionaire businessman complained of "bouts of hunger" from delayed delivery of meals; among the general population of Nigeria's 143 federal prisons, malnutrition is described as a chronic problem. Scabies, a skin disease, is endemic among inmates who go months without bathing. Sanitary conditions promote typhoid fever and tuberculosis. One inmate counted 60 deaths in his cell block during the course of his sentence.

The military government acknowledged the overcrowding that plagues Nigerian prisons when it recently announced the impending release of 362 prisoners to relieve "congestion." The announcement noted that the prisoners had remained behind bars even though they had completed their sentences — a consequence of having been jailed by the Miscellaneous Offenses Tribunal, a court observers say has lived up to its Orwellian name.

Set up by Gen. Sani Abacha, who ruled Nigeria for five years until his death on June 8, the tribunal was outside Nigeria's permanent judiciary, which Abacha also managed to hobble. By declining to fill vacancies on the country's high court, Abacha prevented it from considering Abiola's case.

"It's like digging a grave for a living person and dumping the person in the grave," Abiola told his wife Doyin the day before he died. "All that is left is to put sand on me."

On the other hand, at least Abiola had a lawyer. The last attorney who ventured into the Directorate of Military Intelligence detention center in Lagos was "flogged thoroughly," Fapohunda said. "That's a no-go area for lawyers."

Small wonder that no one knows for certain how many people are imprisoned in Nigeria; PrisonWatch hazards an estimate of 50,000. Even the number of political detainees is a mystery. Among the first 30 freed by Abacha's successor, Gen. Abdulsalam Abubakar, were several activists whose friends assumed they had fled the country.

Last week, when Abubakar announced Nigeria's latest plan to restore civilian rule, he also said he had released 10 people convicted in 1995 of plotting a coup against Abacha — a plot many of Abacha's critics said was fabricated as an excuse to jail his opponents.

"No one has a firm number on how many are still inside," said one diplomat. "We think about 80." Others put the number of politicians, journalists and activists in custody closer to 500.

Slim Pickings in San Salvador

Serge F. Kovaleski in Nejapa, El Salvador

IT MAY be perplexing that Francisco Alberto Chavez and his wife Susana have taken a liking to where they live, given that it is a wasteland of fetid trash, sandstorms that sting the skin and swarming vultures that scavenge for scraps.

But, for the Chavezes, the large Nejapa garbage dump symbolizes something completely different — opportunity, which they have not been able to find anywhere else in this poor Central American country.

They moved to the junk heap, on the outskirts of the capital city, San Salvador, several years ago to live off the land, so to speak, scavenging mostly pieces of plastic, which they wash, cut and sell to local recycling companies. The Chavezes and their five children live in a shack made of wood and tin, a virtual bunker buzzing with flies amid the mounds of refuse.

"We enjoy this kind of life, and we are used to it. I like being surrounded by garbage," said Susana, 53. "The children were born among the garbage, and they are being raised among the garbage. There are times when we get off a bus and people say, 'There go the dirty people.' But I do not care what society has to say because this is the source of our work."

The Chavezes, who earn about $100 a month, are one of four dozen families who have built a shantytown alongside the Nejapa dump, where they eke out an existence gleaning anything of value from the piles of rubbish that are trucked in from the capital and surrounding communities.

Although the squalor is overwhelming, many of the residents say they have become inured to the filth and the intestinal and respiratory illnesses that are the consequences of living within 50 yards of El Salvador's biggest garbage heap. Some of them say their way of life is a trade-off for a chance to earn money and live away from the violence and other dangers found on city streets.

While the Nejapa dump provides a poignant snapshot of the resilience of the human spirit, it also underscores the myriad economic and social problems with which this nation of 6 million people continues to grapple more than five years after peace accords ended a grinding civil war that claimed 70,000 lives.

El Salvador is one of the poorest countries in the Western Hemisphere. Here, the economic disparity between a small wealthy elite and the rest of the population remains enormous despite the influx of more than $1 billion a year in remittances from Salvadorans living in the United States. Furthermore, it is home to one of the world's most violent societies — violence driven largely by the prevalence of street gangs, drugs and firearms left over from 12 years of war.

But for all its unsavoriness — and in part because of that and the fact that people living here own few things of monetary value — the Nejapa dump is a place with little or no crime. "I have found some tranquility here," said Maria Isabel Garcia, 55, who moved to the dump two years ago after living a nomadic, destitute life in San Salvador. She also earns money selling plastic to a local manufacturing firm.

The day's work begins at about 5am when the garbage trucks start rolling in, drawing not only the families who reside here, but hundreds of other poor people from the area in what becomes a competitive scramble to pluck the best of the pickings.

Atop a sandy hill where the trash is dumped, throngs of people, many wearing bandannas over their mouths and noses to fend off some of the stench, spend hours rummaging through the piles of garbage, carrying away whatever might bring them money. But sifting through the trash can also result in grim discoveries, such as human bodies.

On most days, the dump is such a hub of activity that several residents set up refreshment stands where they sell sodas, coffee and snacks.

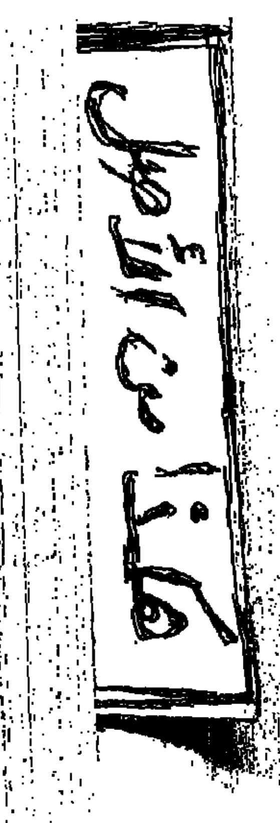
Garcia and the others who live next to the dump get their water for drinking and bathing from a municipal tanker truck that regularly stops here. "The fact that they send out a water truck makes us feel like we are a real community and not just squatters living next to garbage," said one resident.

Francisco Chavez, 44, while cutting up some of the plastic he had collected, took a pragmatic view of his family's existence at the dump.

"We are aware that we are living in a center of contamination," he said. "But we also realize that we have to work here. This is our living, and we appreciate it."



Residents of the Nejapa garbage dump search for anything of value as a truck delivers the trash PHOTO: SERGE F. KOVALESKI



Thirtysomething on A Date in the States

Tamsin Todd

BRIDGET JONES'S DIARY
By Helen Fielding
Viking. 267 pp. $22.95

DEAR Bridget: So you're off to the States. It's about time. You've gone as far as you can in England. What started as a newspaper column — the diary of a single 30-something ("singleton") Londoner — turned into a phenomenon. You've topped the fiction best-seller lists for almost a year. Your name's an adjective, verb and noun, all at once. ("That's very Bridget Jones"; "I pulled a Bridget Jones last night"). You're the most popular girl in Britain — how can you possibly go wrong in America?

It's good your American editors haven't asked you to change for your new readers. You're not — like your skeletony American cousin Ally McBeal — perfectly coiffed. You eat too much, get hangovers, smoke cigarettes by the pack. You sleep with your boss and go on dates with randy 23-year-olds. And when you get introduced to the perfect man you manage to make a complete mess of it. Your diary records it all: "Friday 19 May. 124½ lbs. (have lost 3 lbs., 8 oz. literally overnight — must have eaten food which uses up more calories to eat it than it gives off e.g. v. chewy lettuce), alcohol units 4 (modest), cigarettes 21 (bad), lottery tickets 4 (not v.g.)."

Your life can be — let's face it — pretty miserable. Smug married friends pair you up with morons at dinner parties. ("All the decent chaps have been snapped up," they inform you.) You're expected to coo over friends' babies on Sunday afternoons, despite your massive hangover. You're constantly fielding maternal interrogations — when are you going to get married? To whom? And when the going gets tough, where do you turn for advice? To your long-married mother? Your gay friend Tom? Cosmo? Susan Faludi? Feng Shui?

But you have Helen Fielding. You really couldn't have chosen a better creator. Her account of your blunders and triumphs is achingly funny — yet still sympathetic. She's a clever enough writer to get readers to laugh with you, Bridget, not at you. And she has an Austenian knack for picking out the telling comic detail — whether it's the name of your nosy, noisy boss (Perpetua), or your bungled attempt to work the crowd at a trendy publishing party. I laughed out loud the second time I read your diary.

The great thing about you, Bridget, is you've got universal appeal. Who doesn't want to get the perfect job, attract the perfect mate, behave perfectly in all situations, exercise more, eat less, give more to charity, and be, as you put it, a "perfect saint-style person"? Who hasn't mangled a dinner party or made a thousand New Year's resolutions



("Go to gym three times a week not merely to buy sandwich," "Form functional relationship with responsible adult"), only to break them on New Year's Day?

Of course there will be people who don't like you. American girls, as Henry James was constantly reminding us, are different from English girls. American girls are supposed to behave well. They don't drink as much as you; they put on makeup in the morning, they're taught to go on dates with boys before they kiss them. The Rules — which toed the don't-kiss-a-boy-until-he's-proposed line — was a smash hit in America last year. Rules girls won't like you, Bridget. They'll call you alcoholic, or obsessive, or neurotic. And those new puritans, the feminists — they'll give you trouble too. They won't like your self-deprecating humor. They'll say you're insecure and a poor role model for women. They'll call you an advertiser's plaything — a lipsticked, short-skirted women's mag-reading flirt who'd happily trade in her career for Mr. Right.

Don't listen to them, Bridget. You may not be the stuff of feminists' dreams, but you're not shortsighted either. You know you've got choices and you sometimes make bad decisions. But you also know there's fun to be found in even the most disastrous situations. You're not a complainer. You're working out how to live as a single adult with humor and optimism. And America's filled with singletons doing the same thing. They'll be delighted to hear from you — and so will anyone who's ever been, or known, a singleton. The only way you can blunder this one, Bridget, is by staying home. So you go, girl.

Running Rings Around the President

Jonathan Yardley

LUCKY BASTARD
By Charles McCarry
Random House. 385 pp. $24.95

CHARLES McCarry's ninth novel is dedicated "To the memory of Richard Condon," but that only begins to tell the story. Not merely is Lucky Bastard dedicated to Condon, it is an open act of homage, a deliberate reworking of The Manchurian Candidate, Condon's classic dark comedy of politics and conspiracy in the 1960s, to suit the 1990s.

The 1990s mean Bill Clinton, who is — in thin and transparent disguise — the "lucky bastard" of McCarry's title. Though McCarry includes a cautionary note, claiming that "no character [in Lucky Bastard] is based on anyone who ever lived and no reference is intended to anything that ever happened in the real world," no one who has been paying even the slightest attention in recent years will fail to recognize the inspiration for John Fitzgerald Adams, the irresistibly charming and utterly unscrupulous "lucky bastard."

It is true that fact is fact and fiction is fiction and that the author of the latter must be permitted to keep his distance from the former, a point Philip Roth has bludgeoned critics and readers with for years. Lucky Bastard is a work of the imagination, and so too are the people with whom McCarry has populated it. Jack Adams must be seen as himself rather than as a mirror of Bill Clinton or Jack Kennedy or anyone else. But Adams, carried "from triumph to triumph" by "his brains, his personality and his dazzling mendacity," is Clinton to the core, done up in a portrait far more penetrating and devastating than any other yet drawn, as summarized in the words of a man who understands Adams's essential nature:

"Jack has a great natural gift. Since childhood, he has studied people, found out what they wanted, and made them believe he was giving it to them even when he wasn't. Without money, without influence, without connections, he has risen to the top every time. He has this uncanny gift for making others like him. Trust him. Want to help him. It's like a spell he can cast at will. . . . Jack lies about everything, all the time. He always has. He's not even conscious that he is lying. He lies to please, to manipulate, to get what he wants. The amazing thing is, everyone knows that he lies all the time and about everything, but nobody seems to mind."

Jack, who is 21 as the novel begins in the mid-1960s, is an orphan from "a long line of Ohio steelworkers," an "American boy" with "curly hair, doughy young face, a brilliant smile: large square flashing teeth, eyes swimming with sincerity," long on brains and short on courage, a "unique, natural talent" at the game of politics and a compulsive womanizer who is "mad" for quick, impersonal sex. He also — or so at least he imagines — is the illegitimate son of John Fitzgerald Kennedy, and "the idea that he is a Kennedy bastard is the central obsession of this kid's life."

These words are spoken by an American agent of the Soviet Union, a "talent spotter" in the quest for a leader to take the communist revolution across the globe, even into the Oval Office. In Jack he sees "that rara avis among Ivy League radicals, a birthright member of the proletariat," and he has little difficulty persuading his handlers in Moscow and New York to undertake the young man's indoctrination.

Jack becomes, in the end, not the Manchurian candidate but the Chinese candidate, steered toward the world's highest office by a bizarre alliance of drug dealers, big-money political operators and Marx-besotted leftists. He is at once the cat's

It is Clinton to the core in a portrait far more penetrating and devastating than any other yet drawn

paw of his Soviet manipulators and a loose cannon, an "agent of influence" and a man of his own. In all, a most dangerous and entirely, implacably self-interested creature whose only interest is in running for and winning office, whose nonexistent conscience permits him to follow whatever course proves — or seems — to be most promising.

Unlike Condon's protagonist, a fairly ordinary if not wholly innocent man who is brainwashed into becoming an agent of his Manchurian candidate, McCarry's Jack Adams needs little persuading. He is the ultimate narcissist who feels nothing for "everything in life except the most important thing in life, himself." Apart from a vague sense of mission imparted by his fantasy of belonging to the holy line of Kennedys, he believes in nothing and is willing to do anything as long as it advances him toward the White House.

In this quest he is assisted not merely by his various Soviet handlers but also by Morgan Weatherby, whom he meets at Harvard Law School and in time marries. She is — or so she presents herself to him at first — "a Movement pilgrim," a humorless and obsessive woman who "was, like her many counterparts, deeply deluded about almost everything, a state of being that left her convinced that she was one of the few sane people on Earth, and that her beliefs would keep her so as long as she lived by them and was faithful to them." Her transformation from grim ideologue into "a more traditional American political wife" is most amusing and will, like the character of her husband, reward scrutiny by students of contemporary American history; but we should no doubt follow McCarry's instructions and read no more into her than the novel itself suggests, tempting though it may be to do otherwise.

In this, as in his other novels, McCarry proves himself a mordant and knowledgeable observer of American politics. He finds much to make light of and little, if anything, to esteem. Lucky Bastard may not quite reach the heights of Shelley's Heart, his exemplary novel about life in high-stakes Washington, but it is serious fiction and deserves to be read as such by readers of all political persuasions.

New in paperback

Non-fiction

Roughneck, by Jim Thompson (Vintage, $10)

WHO but hard-boiled novelist and screenwriter Jim Thompson could write an autobiography — call it a noir road memoir — featuring characters with names like Jiggs and Shorty? If you've read any of Thompson's novels (After Dark, My Sweet; The Grifters; The Killer Inside Me), or seen the movies based on them, you already have an idea of low life a la Thompson. Roughneck follows his adventures as he drifts across the American heartland in the 1930s and '40s, meeting up with grifters, bums, schemers and good souls. He works the night shift in a funeral home, where a coworker cools beer alongside the refrigerated cadavers; goes after deadbeats for a store that sells on the installment plan; hops a freight train to Oklahoma City, where he spends a bum's winter digging sewer ditches for a so-called relief program: "I have never anywhere seen men treated with such cold-blooded shabbiness." Eventually drunk and down and out, he convinces a publisher to stake him to room and board for two weeks while he writes a novel — which he does, pulling 20-hour days.

The Corner: A Year in the Life of an Inner-City Neighborhood, by David Simon and Edward Burns (Broadway, $15)

AS THE subtitle indicates, this is a book about a year in a poor black neighborhood. The setting is West Baltimore, and many of the people David Simon and Edward Burns write about — Gary McCullough, his estranged wife, Fran Boyd, a street corner, Fat Curt — are addicted to drugs. Their lives are a ceaseless hustle to get enough money to buy cocaine or heroin. Others, like Ella Thompson, who runs a recreation center, are trying to make a way out of no way in a community where too many are undereducated and underemployed. As in Simon's earlier Homicide, the authors set the scene and show their subjects living their lives, mostly without comment or editorializing.

An Inn Near Kyoto: Writings by American Women Abroad, edited by Kathleen Coskran and C.W. Truesdale (New Rivers, $21.95)

THE third in the New Rivers Press series of women's travel-writing anthologies ranges around the globe, from Tunisia to Chile, Japan to Russia. Some of the contributors are travellers; others have chosen to become short- or long-term residents. In "Marriage Is Very Difficult," about attending a joint Muslim wedding in the Ivory Coast, Carol Spindel is struck by the songs the brides sing: "Each bride makes up her own song, improvising on the spot . . . When she sees a woman she knows, she sings of the woman's sorrows . . . That is why all the women cry when the brides sing to them . . . When the brides want to end, they sing before the elder of the family. It seemed to me that they pleaded with him not to marry them away, but I was wrong. They sang to him of his life and of the tragedies of the last year, the wife who died, the babies who were lost. 'It is Allah's will,' they sang. 'Be comforted.' And that is why he cried."

Telecom merger mania sparked by BT tie-up

Guardian Reporters

A WAVE of mergers and takeovers in the telecommunications industry was in prospect this week as it emerged that two United States phone groups — GTE and Bell Atlantic — are close to joining forces in a $53 billion venture.

News of the imminent tie-up began to leak out as nearly $5 billion was added to the value of British Telecom on Monday when the markets got their first chance to assess its $10 billion international alliance with AT&T made last weekend.

Japan's largest international phone company said on Monday that it expects to join the alliance. Kokusai Denshin Denwa Co (KDD) revealed it had already been approached by the two companies and was giving positive consideration to joining. "It can safely be said that KDD will become a partner of the new alliance," said a spokesman for the Japanese firm.

KDD controls 60 per cent of the Japanese international market and it could also offer the alliance a bridgehead into Asia, an area with enormous potential for growth.

The BT alliance and another mega-merger on the way in the US led to frantic speculation that the long-awaited consolidation of the telecoms industry had finally got into full swing.

GTE has been looking for a partner since its bid to buy MCI in league with BT last year was topped by WorldCom. Bell Atlantic — one of the original Baby Bell local phone operators — bought Nynex for $25.6 billion last year to emerge as the second-largest phone company in the US, after AT&T.

There was also immediate talk of which other players might join the BT/AT&T alliance, set up to tap a market already worth $40 billion and forecast to grow to $200 billion early in the next century.

The new alliance's immediate threat is to the WorldPartners partnership between KDD, AT&T and several other telecommunications carriers in the Asia-Pacific region and Europe.

AT&T, which holds a 36 per cent share in WorldPartners, said it would withdraw from both WorldPartners and a similar European tie-up, Unisource, in 2000, putting the future of both projects in jeopardy.

As share traders reacted gleefully to news of the agreement between BT and AT&T to pool their resources and become the leading provider of services to multinational companies, shares in BT charged ahead to rise to an all-time high.

Analysts saw the tie-up as particularly good news for BT, which has invested fewer assets and a smaller customer base in the venture than AT&T, but still has come up with a 50/50 partnership.

The BT/AT&T alliance will face heavy scrutiny from the European Commission, which is expected to focus on the strength of the two carriers in transatlantic phone communications.

A commission spokesman said that, although the two companies have yet to submit formally their plans, BT chief Sir Peter Bonfield has kept competition commissioner Karel Van Miert informed about the deal. He declined to comment, however, on the regulatory outlook for the tie-up, which the companies believe could take a year to clear through review bodies in Britain, Brussels and the US.

The commission said that the deal would be judged on the same terms as previous link-ups between phone companies. It has placed conditions on many of these alliances, but none has been blocked.

For example, the commission last year cleared BT's plan to acquire MCI, which later collapsed, after the companies agreed to make available to competitors transatlantic cable capacity.

Boardroom greed enrages Labour

Lisa Buckingham and Roger Cowe

BRITAIN'S top executives gave themselves pay rises averaging 19 per cent last year despite pleas from the Government that they set an example to the wider workforce.

The best-paid directors in the country's largest companies received increases that were six times the rate of inflation and four times the growth in average earnings, which was just 4.4 per cent. The Government has repeatedly warned that bigger wage rises will undermine attempts to keep a lid on inflation.

The latest increases — illustrated in the Guardian's analysis of the FTSE-100 leading companies — mean the highest-paid directors now collect as much in a working week as the average employee earns in a year (£16,100).

Britain's captains of industry have ratcheted up their personal pay, on average, to more than £800,000 a year ($1.3 million). This will cause acute embarrassment to the most business-friendly Labour party to assume power, particularly as the Chancellor, Gordon Brown, is already fighting the unions over his anti-wage inflation policies.

Adding to the Government's discomfiture will be the disclosure that a number of Tony Blair's closest advisers are the beneficiaries of some of the biggest pay rises. Gerry Robinson, chairman of the Arts Council, saw his pay rise by more than 18 per cent, to £857,000, Sir Peter Davis at Prudential, who heads the Welfare to Work task force, took a 6 per cent rise to £655,000, and Lord Simon, who has since quit his job at BP to head the Government's European competitiveness effort, still picked up 35 per cent more than the previous year.

The Guardian Index of Top Executive Pay reveals that 12 chief executives received pay packages of more than £1 million last year — led by Sam Chisholm, the pugnacious boss of satellite broadcaster, BSkyB, who earned £6.8 million but has since quit. Jan Leschly, of the drugs group SmithKline Beecham, and Larry Fish, of the Royal Bank of Scotland, both picked up more than £2 million.

These two earned more than the entire boards of 16 of the top companies, including the oil giant Shell and the supermarket group Asda.



Sir Clive Thompson, new president of the CBI and sixth-highest earning executive in Britain opposes pay-restraints PHOTO: MARTIN ARGLES

The Government is concerned that large boardroom pay rises will encourage employees, particularly those in the public sector, to seek inflation-busting increases. Mr Brown fears that such moves could push the economy off the rails and jeopardise his ambitious plans for public spending.

In the early 1990s, when corporate bosses were indulging themselves with pay rises of 25 to 30 per cent, trades union negotiators attempted to use the increases as a yardstick for shopfloor wage claims. Current pay negotiations at two water companies are believed to involve comparisons with directors' earnings.

One tactic being considered by ministers frustrated by the awards to "fat cat" directors of privatised utilities is a move to cap gas, water and electricity bills, on the grounds that if directors can afford higher salaries, they can afford to reduce prices.

But headline pay is now only the tip of the iceberg as most big companies have recently installed incentive schemes which provide bosses with multi-million-pound windfalls year after year.

Hans Snook, the chief of mobile phone group Orange, is already looking at a gain of £6.25 million on his share options even though the company has yet to make a profit. David Varney, at BG, received a six-figure transfer fee, while Marjorie Scardino, the head of media group Pearson, doubled her £750,000 salary with share option grants. Chisholm banked more than £5 million in share options on top of his £6.8 million pay packet.

The continuing growth in boardroom pay comes after a decade of government-inspired attempts to rein in directors' remuneration and establish better standards in the boardroom, with a series of high-profile committees led by top businessmen Sir Richard Greenbury, Sir Adrian Cadbury and, most recently, Sir Ronnie Hampel.

This Government has shied away from criticising the failings of the boardroom in its effort to maintain friendly relations with business. But against the background threat of stagflation and increasingly tense monthly meeting of the Bank of England's monetary policy committee to decide interest rates, Mr Brown is believed to be furious at the latest signs of government impotence against boardroom greed.

Don't curb top pay, says CBI chief

David Gow

THE new president of the Confederation of British Industry last week set out his stall as an unbridled entrepreneur opposed to government regulation and restraints on boardroom pay.

Sir Clive Thompson, chief executive of Rentokil Initial, a company he built up over the past 16 years to be worth £12 billion, made plain his distaste for compulsory recognition of unions and for an hourly £3.60 ($6) national minimum wage.

Sir Clive, who last year earned £1.45 million, making him the sixth highest-earning executive in Britain, criticised calls for curbs on boardroom pay.

After being endorsed as president by the CBI's annual meeting, he described the average £8,727 annual pay of his company's 83,000 British employees as the "competitive rate". He disclosed that 10,000 of these — mainly cleaners and security guards — would be "impacted directly" by the minimum wage which had been set "towards the top end of our expectations".

This and new limits on working time would, he added, knock some £10 million off Rentokil's £400 million-plus profits — and the cost would be passed on to customers.

Sir Clive — an avowed non-Labour voter — said unions might be suited to more traditional industries but "in businesses in the fast-developing services sector they are really not appropriate".

Less than 10 per cent of Rentokil staff are in unions.

"We at Rentokil have never been anti-union. The company has been built up by treating people as individuals and the company trusting the individuals . . . That's the basis on which we have built it up during my 16 years as chief executive from 4,000 employees in the UK to 140,000 in 40 countries."

In Brief

NATIONWIDE, Britain's biggest building society, remained mutual after a narrow 50.8 per cent to 49.2 per cent vote against converting to a bank.

THREE international con-men, headed by a German, Gerhard Martens, have been convicted for their part in a fraud that used a bogus bank in the Devon resort town of Torquay to swindle victims of more than $11 million.

BOEING, the aircraft-maker, revealed plans to axe up to 28,000 jobs following a 46 per cent slump in second-quarter earnings. It blamed the profits downturn — from $476 million to $258 million — on the cost of phasing out the McDonnell Douglas MD11 and introducing three versions of the Boeing 737.

A NEW transatlantic trade war loomed as the European Union filed a suit against the United States, claiming that US exports were being subsidised by $2 billion a year in government-approved tax dodges.

THE soaring pound claimed another victim as ICI blamed the "horrendous" level of sterling for lower earnings. More than $1.6 billion was wiped off the value of ICI after the firm warned its profits in the next six months would be lower than expected. Meanwhile figures from the Office of National Statistics showed that Britain's trade gap had ballooned to more than $3 billion in May.

ROVER, the carmaker, unveiled plans for at least 1,500 redundancies among its 39,000-strong British workforce and the introduction of the four-day week at plants to try to offset the strong pound's damaging impact on earnings.

THE City's troubled Liffe futures exchange was embroiled in controversy after the resignation of Daniel Hodson, its chief executive, and the appointment of one of the exchange's founders, Brian Williamson, as executive chairman.

FOREIGN EXCHANGES

	Sterling rates July 27	Sterling rates July 20
Australia	2.7121-2.7158	2.6169-2.6206
Austria	20.76-20.77	20.62-20.64
Belgium	60.81-60.89	60.43-60.52
Canada	2.4881-2.4903	2.4603-2.4625
Denmark	11.24-11.25	11.16-11.17
France	9.88-9.89	9.82-9.83
Germany	2.9497-2.9522	2.9312-2.9338
Hong Kong	12.82-12.83	12.77-12.77
Ireland	1.1728-1.1745	1.1659-1.1673
Italy	2,908-2,911	2,890-2,893
Japan	235.33-235.62	228.96-229.23
Netherlands	3.3260-3.3288	3.3042-3.3068
New Zealand	3.2221-3.2295	3.1172-3.1249
Norway	12.47-12.48	12.36-12.38
Portugal	301.72-301.97	299.86-300.18
Spain	250.28-250.60	248.74-248.99
Sweden	13.03-13.06	12.99-13.01
Switzerland	2.4772-2.4802	2.4749-2.4777
USA	1.6552-1.6561	1.6484-1.6493
ECU	1.4927-1.4953	1.4846-1.4864

FTSE100 Share Index down [illegible] at [illegible]. FTSE 250 Index down [illegible] at 5407.4. Gold down $4.75 at [illegible].



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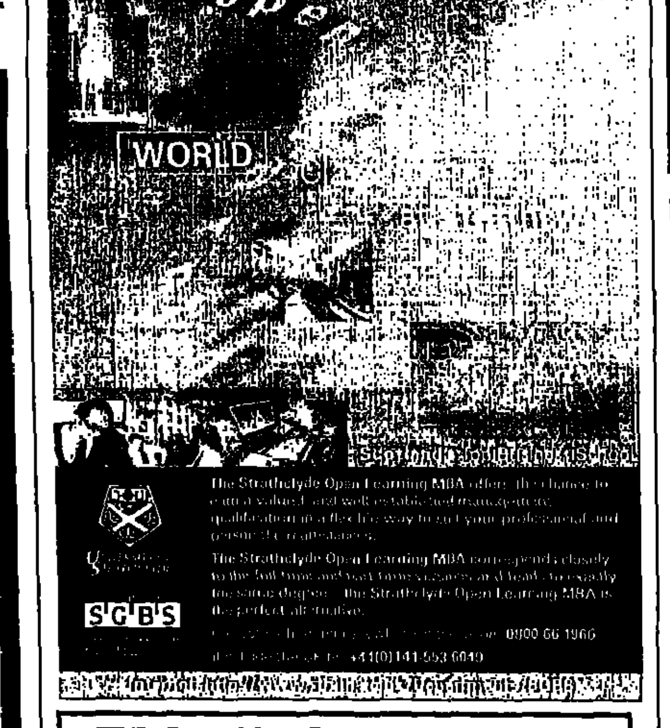
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THE COMMUNITY HEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT CO-ORDINATOR

is responsible for managing all aspects of the Trust's Community Health and Development Programme, including policy and planning, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation, quality of field work and managing a staff of 30. The annual programme budget is approximately £100,000. The Co-ordinator will also be a member of BNMT's senior management team and play an active role in reviewing and developing the work of BNMT as a whole and be the organisation's principal adviser on community development and participation.

QUALIFICATIONS: Relevant qualification at degree level (e.g. in public health or community development). Good spoken and written English essential, Nepali language skills an advantage.

EXPERIENCE: At least two years experience of managing community health and development work in a developing country, including use of participatory approaches. Communication skills and cultural sensitivity essential.

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Community Health Trainer *Responsibilities:* develop a community health programme, enhance capacity within the provincial health system, promote a participatory approach. *Requirements:* two years' experience in community health, preferably training community health workers and traditional birth attendants, a health qualification and experience of PRA. Salary range £10,000 - £12,000

All positions require some experience of primary health care and good written and spoken English. All contracts are for 24 months and offer salary plus accommodation and living allowance.

For further details and an application form (please state which job you wish to apply for) contact Madeleine Hammond, Health Unlimited, Prince Consort House, 27-29 Albert Embankment, London SE1 7TS email: ae161@dial.pipex.com * fax +44 171 582 5900 * Closing date for returned application forms 14 September 1998.

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Wells that bring nothing but ills

Boreholes sunk to bring 'safe' drinking water to India's millions have merely caused misery, reports **Fred Pearce**

THE PUMP was installed in Shatap's village of Hirapur, in the central state of Madhya Pradesh, during the United Nations' International Water Decade of the 1980s. Its borehole was one of millions sunk throughout the world in a highly publicised race to provide the world's poor with "safe" drinking water, planned and part-funded by aid agencies such as Unicef, the UN children's fund.

The underground water was indeed mostly free of the bacteria that can infest polluted surface water. But nobody ever tested the underground water for natural chemicals, such as fluoride, even though they were known to be widely present in rocks from which the water was pumped. Madhya Pradesh itself is famous for its rich mineral deposits.

"The problem is enormous, unbelievable," says Andezhath Susheela of the Fluorosis Research and Rural Development Foundation in Delhi. She has been unravelling the national story for a decade, during which time her estimate of the number of people leading "a painful and crippled life" from fluorosis has risen from 1 million to 25 million and now to 60 million — 6 million of them children — spread across tens of thousands of communities. "In some villages three-quarters of the population are seriously affected."



Krishna looks nine years old. She is 14. She cannot walk to school because her legs are cruelly bowed by fluorosis
PHOTO: FRED PEARCE

The first rains of this summer's monsoon are beginning to fall as Shatap and his friends assemble in the yard of the Hirapur village head, Chudaman Bhavre. Almost all of them are knock-kneed and have the brown-stained teeth characteristic of the first stages of fluoride poisoning. They drank water from a poisoned pump while attending the village primary school close by. Fluoride levels in the water were 11 times the safety limit of one part per million.

The children who lived nearest to the pump and drank its water continuously have suffered most. Besides Shatap, there is Kamala and her bow-legged sister Krishna, both daughters of the village head. Aged 14 but looking no more than nine, Krishna was forced to abandon schooling because her deformed limbs could no longer take her to the secondary school in a neighbouring village.

Many parents, including Krishna's mother, suffer painful, stiff and misshapen backs and hips, and chronic gastro-enteritis. Bhaskar Raman, a local activist who brought the village's plight to the attention of doctors, says there has been an epidemic of stillbirths and involuntary abortions — all known symptoms of fluoride poisoning.

All across Mandla, a district of a million or so people in eastern Madhya Pradesh, a steady stream of children have reported similar complaints since the late 1980s. But in this remote corner of central India, doctors had not heard of fluorosis. They instead diagnosed arthritis, polio, rickets, a genetic fault or simply a "mystery disease". The link with water was never made. Until, that is, Tapas Chakma, a young research officer at the Regional Medical Research Centre in Jabalpur came to the village of Tilaipani in 1995 and suggested that a local girl's strange disease might be fluorosis.

Initially, he was rebuffed by local officials. "I asked the Pollution Control Board about the water here, and they assured me it was safe," Chakma recalls. "I didn't accept that and sent a water sample to Delhi, which revealed the truth." Soon he began to hear about other villages with similar problems, and he demanded a district-wide screening of water.

Three years later, engineers have dismantled more than 500 pumps in more than 300 villages in Mandla to prevent people drinking the poisoned water.

Chakma's boss at the medical research centre, Ravi Shankar Tiwary, says "some of the blame lies with aid agencies such as Unicef". These bodies lobbied for and helped fund the boreholes-and-handpumps programme. "But I also blame the public health engineers in Mandla for what has happened. They dug the wells. They said at first that they had tested the water. But they didn't. I know. They didn't have the right equipment."

The whiff of corruption hangs over the Mandla story. Raman alleges that private contractors sank boreholes deeper than necessary as part of a scam to milk the public purse. He says that 30 metres would have been deep enough — a figure borne out now, at the end of the dry season, when open wells in the villages contain water at depths of between just 15 and 20 metres. Sinking the boreholes to 50 metres increased the value of the contracts, Raman says, but it also penetrated the fluoride-bearing rocks that were only present at these lower depths.

Officials at the Mandla department of public health engineering brush off inquiries, even from Unicef, which has sought to repair damage by offering to install some trial defluoridation equipment. "In Mandla, the administration is so terrified they won't let us go near," says Vishwas Joshi, Unicef's water project officer in Delhi.

But Mandla's tragedy is a tiny part of a vast landscape of ignorance, confusion and indifference that is crippling millions in the state of Madhya Pradesh and beyond. A decade ago, government scientists named 12 districts in the state, including Mandla, as being at risk from fluoride in water. To date, only Mandla's wells have been fully surveyed. But the more the scientists look, the more they find.

Gourisankar Ghosh, who as head of India's National Drinking Water Mission warned about the problem to little avail in the late 1980s, says: "There should have been far greater vigilance. We were sinking 60,000 boreholes a year and analysing water from at most a tenth of them."

Since then geologists have devoted much time to plotting fluoride-bearing rocks. They have established that fluoride is associated with weathering granite rocks and with water low in calcium. Gunnar Jacks of Sweden's Royal Institute of Technology found the fluoride levels are highest in valley bottoms. Five years ago he and geologists from the Central Ground Water Board of India recommended siting wells further up hillsides. Yet few doctors or water engineers in India seem to have heard of this.

Lack of communication is endemic, says Susheela of the fluorosis research foundation. "Engineers just presume that underground water is clean so they don't test it. Doctors are not taught about fluorosis in our medical schools, so they don't diagnose it." What now? Digvijay Singh, Madhya Pradesh's chief minister has announced plans to defluoridate water. That was two years ago, and there's still little sign of progress.

IN HIRAPUR, engineers have laid new water pipes but have not yet connected them to a source. As a result, villagers have started to use an ancient open well, hauling buckets of water from a reservoir just as open to pollution from the surface.

For its part, Unicef has backed efforts to treat water to remove fluoride as it is pumped to the surface. Early techniques were too expensive, and most defluoridation equipment installed over the past decade is out of action. Unicef is now testing a low-cost kit for homes.

Meanwhile India's escalating water crisis, which is forcing people to search for water deeper and deeper underground, is exacerbating the problem. "When you pump water from deeper underground you are tapping older water, water which has been in contact with the rocks for longer. So it is more contaminated," says Joshi. As the water tables continue to fall in response to demand, fluoride levels in thousands of boreholes, many of them still untested, will continue to rise.

Wontok answer to global incomprehension

Ken Campbell explains why he is staging a Pidgin version of Macbeth

I DO nothing these days that isn't in some way aimed at achieving my millennium project: establishing a world language.

If you wanted to come up with a beguiling world language that could be learned in a couple of days, how might you go about it?

Here's one way: round up thousands of geezers, preferably illiterate, none of whom speak each other's language, barbwire them in a compound, make them live and work and play together for years, and get Irishmen to be their guards.

Actually, you don't have do that because it's already been done. And we the British did it. The Great World Lingo Experiment began in 1863. Obviously, back in those times it was difficult to get adequate funding for language experimentation, so it was done under the guise of supplying cheaper sugar for our tea.

The year 1863 saw the opening of the mighty sugar cane plantations of Queensland. We would have used Aboriginal labour, but it was too good at getting away. So we went slaving and blackbirding for staff up the Cannibal Island chain of the New Hebrides: Tanna, Erromango, Malekula, Espiritu Santo, Pentecost, Ambrym. Take the small island Tanna — there are 26 utterly different languages on Tanna. Each tribe speaks in a completely different tongue because they don't want the other tribes overhearing their dinner plans.

Eventually, in order to communicate, the slaves adopt and adapt the one linguistic constant, the language of the guards. And that was English as spoken by Irishmen. As new "indentured labour" arrived on the plantation, they wanted to teach the newcomers the plantation language (*Tok blong Plantesen*) as quickly as possible. By means of song and dance and fooling around they were able to have a new recruit ably expressing himself in a couple of days.

Today millions speak it. It's the official language of Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands and the Republic of Vanuatu (formerly the "New Hebrides"). It's called variously "Tok Pisin", "Pidgin" and "Bislama". And it takes but two days to learn, *wherever you are from*. To speak English is an advantage for the first hour or two, but then it holds you back, because there is a lot the English speaker has to unlearn.

Why is it so easy to learn? Because it's got virtually no grammar. It's got a few habits, that's all. I spent years learning adequate German and poorish French, and tenses are the number one (*nambawan*) hold-up. Wol Wantok doesn't bother with them. If it's in the past you bung in the word *bin*. If it has not happened yet, ie, in the future, you say *bambae*, like by-and-by, and if it's now, and you want to stress the nowness of your communication, here's a useful little word: *nao*, pronounced similar to the English "now".

Subjunctives they looked into, but reckoned they'd not really brought anyone any happiness.

And how about this: no verb "to be". It turns out you don't need one. Take the simple sentence "I am here." "I", yes we understand that; "here" yes, get that; but what does the "am" mean? What nuance do you get from the "am"? "I here" surely does it. But Wol Wantok thinking is that "I" might get muddled with one of the things you see through, so it opts for the clarity of "me here" (*mi ia*).

On July 25 and August 1, Trevor Nunn has given over to me the National Theatre's Cottesloe stage to present my Wol Wantok production of Shakespeare's Macbeth. (*Wol Nambawan! Makbed blong Wilum Sekspia, wan evri pla evri pipel wol wantok singsing konset samting.*) A dozen absolutely top-notch young and youngish performers, calling themselves, for the occasion, the Pidgin Players, have not only learned Wol Wantok, they have committed the entire text of Makbed to memory. After these two London performances, the plan is for the company to split into ones, twos and threes and go off round the wol doing productions of Makbed and other stuff with local talent, thus doing their bit to spread the tok.

What's it like then, Macbeth in Wol Wantok? An improvement. Reducing iambic pentameters to rude voodoo telegrams is just the thing the piece has been needing. The plot seems much more likely in Pidgin: there are a couple of holes which become apparent when you de-sopo... cise the text, and these I've deftly fixed. (*Mi bin fiksim...*)

Assassination is a daily risk for journalists in Algeria, torn between Islamic extremists and a corrupt regime. **Nick Ryan** on the struggle to present the facts

Truth under attack

"*THE MOST* difficult times are when I take pictures after the massacres." The voice is soft, understated. "I have to stay in control. I can't be touched emotionally, but it's very hard what we see, very hard." The face is young, the eyes bloodshot. A tired, melancholic smile plays on the lips, as fingers press another cigarette into service. "One time after a massacre, a woman came to me like this, with a baby in her arms. She said that his mother and father had just been killed, and she cried at me: 'What am I going to do with him, what am I going to do?' And it was very hard for me, because that little baby was the same age as my son. At that time I couldn't see my family. I couldn't sleep in my house. I had to move, move, always move."

He takes a deep breath. "And so that was the only time I fell down. But I still took the pictures of the woman and that baby. If you try and follow one story like this, you can never work again. There are hundreds of examples like this. It's horrible, horrible," he repeats over and over to himself, shaking his head.

It is difficult not to be moved by Khared's (not his real name) story or those of hundreds like him. One of Algeria's top press photographers, he admits: "Working here in Algeria is very, very hard. I can't live at home; I've had to send my wife and my son to France, because of the danger."

Outside the sun glistens on the whitewashed colonial buildings, which give Algiers its name of La Ville Blanche — The White City.

This is a country of great contrasts. During one of my meetings with Khared — which could only take place with permission from Ministry of Interior minders — a bomb exploded in the distance, which we later learned had killed 25 people.

As Khared himself told me, there are even crack squads whose job it is to clear up bombsites in two hours, thus helping restore a sense of normality. In some ways, it is not an obvious conflict. This is no Beirut, yet for journalists it has become their prison.

Photographers such as Khared are in the front line of a civil war which has torn apart this former French colony. It is a conflict which has claimed 80,000 lives in just six years.

It is an extremely vicious war; as one journalist put it, "worse than Latin America or Cambodia, fought without mercy", on either side. Whole villages have been massacred by extremists and death squads.

Checkpoints can turn into ambushes, and thousands have disappeared. This is a war in which children and babies have frequently had their throats cut, and pregnant women been disembowelled.

Yet there is another, unnoticed, battle here; one fought by a fledgling independent press and the journalist-proprietors who run it. Caught between a repressive regime, keen to silence criticism, and Islamic fundamentalists, who regard them as traitors, journalists have often been critical of both sides — with deadly results.

Seventy journalists, photographers and associated staff have lost their lives here since May 1993, killed by the fundamentalists. Sometimes the killers have ambushed their victims and killed them with a single shot to the head. Or they have cut their throats, often in front of friends or family. Even engaged couples who are journalists have been slain while walking together. The traditional hijab, or veil, has been no protection for women. Foreign journalists have died too, including an ABC cameraman, Olivier "X". Many of those killed were not even political or security correspondents — technicians, cartoonists and secretaries.

As a result many journalists use pseudonyms, dare not publish pictures of their faces, and often lie about their profession. One woman I met at El Khabar, the biggest selling Arabic title, told her family she works as a hairdresser.

My first visit to La Maison de la Presse (Press House), in the centre of Algiers, is a tense affair. Bodyguards accompany us every step of the way into this fortified old barracks, where the country's 20 or so independent newspapers are housed. There is a palpable sense of a community under siege, surrounded on all sides by high walls, watch-towers and armed guards. Even these did not stop the bombers who killed four journalists with a car bomb in 1996. Their photographs adorn the walls of the offices, like those of numerous other martyrs.

JOURNALISTS such as Omar Belhouchet, editor and owner of El Watan, the country's leading independent, French-speaking newspaper, see their work as a duty and a battle. Since it was established in 1990, following a relaxation of press laws that encouraged journalists to create their own newspapers, El Watan has broken many stories about state corruption and the security situation. As a result, the paper currently faces more than 20 court cases brought by the government. Belhouchet himself has been imprisoned for several weeks, together with colleagues, for reporting on sensitive security matters without state approval. He has become a folk hero for the average Algerian. I learn only later, when I see him drive past in his old Renault, that he has twice been ambushed by armed fanatics.



Omar Belhouchet: 'Independence is a daily combat' PHOTO: JULIA GUEST

"Independence is a daily combat," Belhouchet admits with a wry smile. "But the first fight is against death. In the last few years there was not a week without a journalist being assassinated or facing government censorship. That's why we can't live a normal life or live at home with our families, and why we continue to live like this."

The same fierce independence is evident at El Khabar, which sells 180,000 copies a day. In 1992, proprietor Djerri Ali was the Islamists' first press target, when his car was burned. "They threatened me by telephone, by letters sent to my home," he says. "They want to kill me. For them, we are an Arabic language newspaper and that means we don't have a right to talk about them. We are supposed to follow them. But we have refused them, so we are targeted before the French-speaking papers."

A jovial man, reclining in an old armchair beneath a picture of a murdered colleague, he has also been imprisoned for offending a former interior minister. But "the first enemy is terrorism, the fanatics. The regime is not as much your enemy, because it never kills you." This is a phrase repeated time and again by every journalist I meet.

However, it's not just the Islamic groups that cause them problems. "The authorities are always saying 'Why do you take pictures?' and demanding authorisation," says Khared. But Belhouchet adds that the media are actually freer here than in neighbouring countries, such as Morocco and Tunisia (which often ban Algerian newspapers). They also fiercely defend their right to print critical stories about corruption or security issues. Yet he admits that the government controls all the printing presses — having closed down the only independent press last year — and the vast majority of advertising, thus giving it huge power over the newspapers. To date, 24 of them have been suspended for reporting on "security-related" matters. This is a broad category which the authorities interpret as encompassing guerrilla attacks, human rights abuses and the reporting of Islamic viewpoints. Until last December they also used "reading committees" to ensure that stories conformed to official accounts.

Without a doubt, one of the first names on the Islamists' death lists is Saihi Horria. A leading documentary film maker, Saihi has done more than anyone to raise the profile of women's issues and explode the myths propagated by the extremists.

Travelling in the field with a small camera crew, she has lived with female patriots fighting the Islamists in the so-called Death Triangle, an area to the west of Algiers. She also made an explosive programme about a woman who escaped from the main Islamic group, having been kidnapped, tortured and gang-raped by the terrorists. A passionate feminist, Saihi also lives unmarried with her partner. This is a final slap in the face for the Islamic groups, who have repeatedly threatened to kill her. When I met her at my hotel, she told me how it was impossible to go to her nephew's wedding the next day, because she would be putting the family in too much danger.

BUT WHY take such risks? "Because all of us were condemned, women and journalists alike, by the Islamists. They threatened everybody," she says in a strong, clear voice. She then recounts a long list of those she knew who have now been killed. "My main goal is to break their propaganda, to try to show the world how they really live. Although I work for Algerian TV, I work for Algeria, my country, first."

For Khared, who introduced us, it's simply a chance "to show the truth. I try to do every picture in my country. It's a wonderful country. But as a photographer I'm implicated in this conflict — I have to cover it. And I'm very sad, because I wanted to show other things about my country."

Many others echo his sentiments. The journalists have to be inventive with what little resources they have. Ali, a melancholic security correspondent with El Khabar, travels the country in taxis, too poor to buy air tickets. Although those working for the international media make a reasonable living, most have to survive on less than $100 per month — barely sufficient for their daily needs. Most write their reports by hand, as there is a lack of modern equipment available. Many live in tiny rooms inside El Manor, a slightly shabby, ex-tourist hotel, turned into a fortified compound 30km to the west of the capital Algiers. There is a sad, depressed atmosphere to the whole place.

Most journalists I spoke to agreed that the security situation has improved: no one has yet been killed this year, and the government is set to introduce a new draft press law. Still, the majority remain wary.

Omar Belhouchet is optimistic, if realistic, about the future. "We can go outside now, at least. The reality of the press here is not well known in Europe or elsewhere, and that's sad, because this is a very symbolic fight, a fight I live inside. This is the journalists' fight, and society's fight, to build a democracy and a free press." ©

The world's journalists under siege



Over the past 10 years Algeria has been the most dangerous country in the world for journalists, with 60 deaths between 1988 and 1997. The Committee for the Protection of Journalists, which monitors cases of journalists who it has established were killed because of their profession, provides these figures for victims of "the most vicious form of censorship", country by country.

Journalists killed while on assignment or as a direct result of their profession, 1988-97

Americas (total 120)
Colombia 40
Peru 16
Mexico 12
Brazil 10
El Salvador 10
USA 7
Guatemala 4
Haiti 4
Argentina 2
Honduras 2
Venezuela 2
Canada 1
Chile 1
Dominican Republic 1
Ecuador 1
Panama 1
Paraguay 1

Europe and former USSR (128)
Russia 29
Tajikistan 29
Croatia 26
Bosnia and Herzegovina [illegible]
Soviet Union 8
Georgia 3
Ukraine 3
Azerbaijan 2
Romania 2
Slovenia 2
Belgium 1
Ireland 1
Lithuania 1

Eight journalists were killed in Russia, Azerbaijan and Latvia (then all part of the Soviet Union) from 1988 to 1991

Middle East and North Africa [illegible]
Algeria 60
Turkey [illegible]
[illegible]

Asia [illegible]
India 24
Philippines 20
Pakistan [illegible]
Cambodia 6
Afghanistan [illegible]
Sri Lanka [illegible]
Indonesia 4
Bangladesh [illegible]
Papua New Guinea 1
Thailand [illegible]
Vietnam [illegible]

Africa [illegible]
Rwanda [illegible]
Somalia [illegible]
Angola [illegible]
Chad [illegible]
South Africa [illegible]
Burundi 3
[illegible]

Murdered Irish crime reporter Veronica Guerin

Source: CPJ

Breeding like mice

HAWAIIAN scientists have followed Dolly the cloned sheep with replica mice. And in a world first, they cloned more mice from the first generation, *writes Tim Radford.*

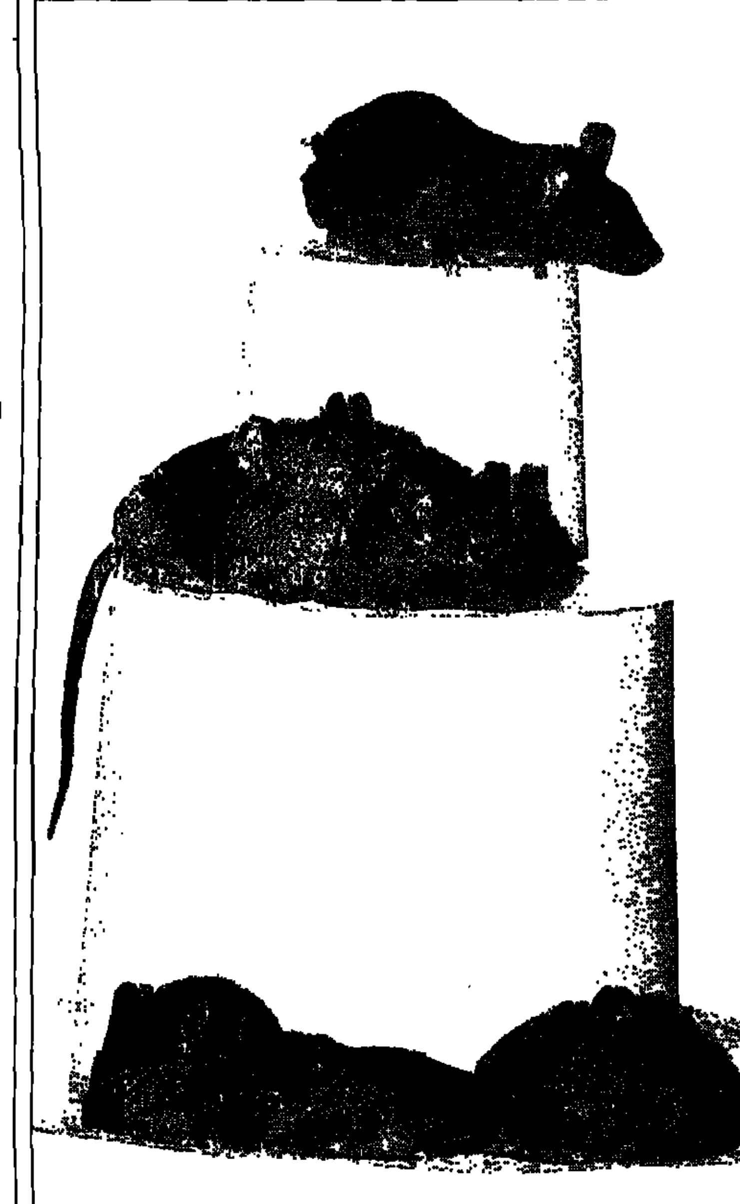
Their work means that researchers can use clones to study what happens in cancer, Aids, diabetes, multiple sclerosis and ageing. It could also lead to surer ways of "copying" the best farm animals.

The Hawaiian team is to collaborate with PPL Therapeutics — the company which uses genetically engineered sheep to make vital human proteins at Roslin near Edinburgh.

The research opens the way for much faster research experiments because mice breed quicker than sheep.

"Mice have a short generation time, they are easy to work with, they are much cheaper to work with, you can keep them in very controlled conditions, they are not seasonal breeders like sheep are," said Harry Griffin of the Roslin Institute.

Ryuzo Yanagimachi of the University of Hawaii and his colleagues created 50 identical mice. They took the DNA from the cell of a female adult and injected it into an egg from which the DNA had been removed. They popped the artificially fertilised egg into a surrogate mother and produced the first clone. They went on to make second and third generations of cloned mice, some of which have been mated and have raised normal offspring.



Three generations of cloned mice: nucleus donor (top), second and third generations, endorsing the Roslin team's work

Letter from Mojave Ole Gjerstad

Desert storm

"*VIVA* El Niño!" shouts the large banner stretched above the main street of Palm Springs, California. The wet spring produced the most spectacular bloom in 40 years in the Mojave Desert and attracted visitors in droves from the waterlogged coast, doubling the size of the golf-and-martini set who annually occupy this man-made oasis between snow-capped mountains.

But El Niño hadn't finished with the desert. As spring turned to summer, its strong westerly winds blew the smog of Los Angeles further inland than ever. And now that the normal 45C summer weather has arrived, the famous pure air of Palm Springs yields to a sulphur-laden urban soup. By the end of a typical afternoon, the splendid Mount San Gorgonio is lost from view.

"Every day at sunset we would look at that peak, and it would give a feeling of peace to every person living in the valley," says Ernie Quintana, a local boy who has gone on to become superintendent of the Joshua Tree national park. "But now," he says, "people who move here hardly seem to be aware that the mountain exists."

The smog is but one of several signs that urban America is catching up with the desert. Palm Springs is becoming a crowded, tacky roadstop, its 103 golf courses jammed with budget vacationers and seasonal "snowbirds". To compete, instant gamble-golf-shopping resorts — each containing a couple of gaudy casino hotels, one golf course and one pastel-painted factory outlet mall — sprout from the Mojave sands along the California-Nevada state line.

Las Vegas, fuelled by a gambling craze, has become the fastest growing city in the United States. Landscaping crews have rolled out 3,000 acres of pre-grown lawns this year alone, as rattlesnake habitat turns into prime real estate. Meanwhile in the face of Saddam Hussein's resilience, the Pentagon has stepped up activity at its three vast Mojave combat training grounds. Campers in the Joshua Tree park complain that screaming aircraft and thuds from the rocket ranges ruin the ambience of their outings.

But the fate of the Mojave could be decided by a different kind of desert warfare. Conservationists, unable to persuade politicians that fresh air, peace and quiet alone are valid reasons to rein in the developers, have resorted to one of the most modern weapons in the American legal arsenal: the Endangered Species Act. And within its realm they have located the Mojave equivalent of the infamous spotted owl: the desert tortoise, the oldest armour in history.

In the pluvial period following the last Ice Age, most of the Mojave was made up of lakes. Turtles thrived, and ultimately managed the 5,000 year transition to a hot and sandy habitat. But recently their numbers have declined precipitously.

While scientists are working to find out why, environmentalists are using the Endangered Species Act to fight the egregious attacks on tortoise habitat. Marine Corps tank commanders now have to carry "tortoise alert cards" that spell out a set of procedures designed to avoid frightening the slow-moving reptiles.

IF THE tortoise in question refuses to budge within five minutes, the tank crews have to wait for their environment officer to come out and move it. Contact with ungloved GI hands could transmit disease to the animal.

Across the mountains from the Marine Corps base, a California Supreme Court judge has so far blocked the opening of a "mega-dump" — the world's largest garbage disposal site — on the grounds that the operator has failed to show that tortoises won't be negatively affected. The battle over the dump has become one of the most protracted environmental confrontations in southern California.

But if the Mojave has been called "the definitive American desert", it's also the home of the genuine American compromise. Las Vegas property developers pay a $550 "land disturbance fee" for each acre of desert they bulldoze. With their appetite for acreage, that money has now ballooned into a $30 million endowment fund, a principal purpose of which is . . . to save the desert tortoise.

Notes and Queries Joseph Harker

***FOR* minimal environmental damage, should I dry my hands using the roller towel, a paper towel, or the hot air drier?**

A COUPLE of quick shakes of the hands, a rub on the seat of the (100 per cent cotton, of course) trousers not only saves on costs to the environment, but also the time otherwise taken waiting in line for the aforementioned "facilities". — *Bruce Collins, Kiel, Germany*

***WHICH* playing card is known as the curse of Scotland and why?**

THE "Curse of Scotland" was the name given to the nine of diamonds playing card but there is little agreement over how it earned this nickname. Innumerable references suggest that it seems to have been known as such in Scotland for 300 years and more, and the most frequently quoted story is that the infamous victor of the Battle of Culloden, the Duke of Cumberland, wrote an order in the field on the back of a playing card which was the nine of diamonds, that no quarter was to be given to the Jacobite soldiers. It helps the credibility of this story that Cumberland is said to have been an inveterate gambler and generally carried a pack of cards in his pocket. Another (and earlier) story is that nine lozenges in the heraldry of John Dalrymple, first earl of Stair, bore a resemblance to the nine of diamonds. Dalrymple was implicated in the Massacre of Glencoe in 1692 earning him almost universal detestation. These and many other citations were gathered by the great lexicographer and editor of the Oxford English Dictionary, Sir James Murray (1837-1915). — *Hugh Cheape, National Museums of Scotland, Edinburgh*

***WHY* is there no standard global design for pylons?**

IF WE cannot even decide on a common design for a simple electric plug, even within the European Union, then what chance do we have with whopping great pylons? — *David Croston-Melling, Wilrenlos, Switzerland*

***WHO* was the first authenticated named individual in history?**

ASIDE from early Biblical figures, who are historically unverifiable, the first named individual was Mes-anni-pad-da, King of Ur in Southern Iraq. This name was found on a clay tablet dating to around 3100BC, and his existence is historically corroborated by later "king lists" of the third millennium BC. — *Tom Cosson, Norwich*

HISTORY is the written story of mankind, as opposed to pre-history which relies on archaeological evidence. According to J M Roberts in his History Of The World, the "Epic of Gilgamesh" is the oldest story, dating about 2000 BC. He ruled in Guruk, part of the Sumerian civilization of Lower Mesopotamia, and was a real person. At one point Gilgamesh builds an ark to save himself and his family from a great flood which obliterates the rest of mankind. — *Neil Martin, History Today magazine, London*

Any answers?

***WHY* did the Big Bang create a universe of particles with exact masses, spins and electrical charges? The result of an explosion in our corner of space is certainly not a neat pile of magnetised Lego blocks! —** *Marian Simpson, Berkeley, California*

***IN ENGLAND,* Lamb and Bacon are common surnames, but few people are called Beef. In France, Le Boeuf seems to be fairly common but not L'Agneau or Le Bacon. Why? —** *Brian McClintock, Didsbury, Manchester*

***DO FISH* yawn? —** *R Gunzburg, Belgium*

***IS MY* hand in any danger when I interrupt the operation of my microwave and reach inside? —** *Robert Baker, Sapporo, Japan*

Answers should be e-mailed to weekly@guardian.co.uk, faxed to 0171/+44171-242-0985, or posted to The Guardian Weekly, 75 Farringdon Road, London EC1M 3HQ.
The Notes & Queries website is at http://nq.guardian.co.uk/

A Country Diary

Virginia Spiers

L'AVEYRON, France: Tiled roofs of Cordes glow red in the evening sun, on a hilltop above hot fields of cut corn, lucerne and sunflowers. We have walked from Millau by way of the Aveyron valley, the airy plateau of Levezou some 150km behind us. There, yellow broom is brilliant among sorrel and waving grasses, *Ornatus narcissi* still flowering in shade. Vast tracts of extensive farming and patches of woodland recede into the blue distance around Mont Aigoual. Lower down, paths are shaded with holly and oak, junctions marked with calvaries in stone or iron, hedges thick with elder, rose and honeysuckle. This intensely green, pastoral landscape is punctuated by occasional groups of sleek Charolais cows and calves, luminous in the summer haze. Farms, with distinctive steep-roofed dovecotes, have neat woodstacks and lush gardens, all growing beans, spinach, lettuce, peas and tomatoes, with rows of gladioli, lilies and swags of pink and red roses. Fowls peck around machinery parked under old walnuts.

Folded away in this bosky land the fortified church of Inières is massive. The huge keep, topped with belfry, built above the nave, was an essential refuge in turbulent days. It rains once. As we walk out from Rodez the cathedral's red sandstone gargoyles spout rain. Later, the sluggish Aveyron runs muddy, past old mills grown about with silvery willows, the path overhung with box draped in moss. Towards Najac, cicadas are ever more clamorous, supplanting the bolsterous songs of blackcaps. Above the wooded gorge, on the Causses de Souzil, in sparse oak and juniper scrub, are domed cazelles, old stone shelters. Greenness has faded and the stony, red earth path from Villefranche trails small pink and white bindweed and sweet pea.

Smiling face of capitalism

Tiny Rowland

JOSEPH Conrad described one of his villains as a "*papier-mâché* Mephistopheles". That was always the public image of Tiny Rowland, who has died aged 80. His secretive nature and mocking smile seemed to fit perfectly with Edward Heath's descriptive tag — "an unpleasant and unacceptable face of capitalism".

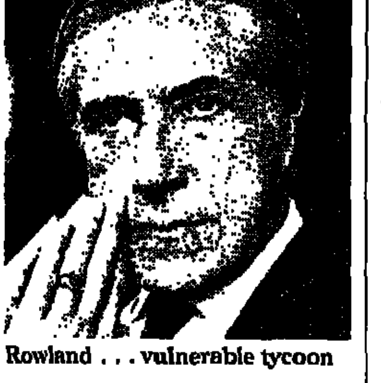
Tiny Rowland was a curiously vulnerable tycoon. His creation, the £2 billion Lonrho conglomerate, was snatched from him in 1993 by Dieter Bock, an adroit German property developer brought in to resolve mounting debt problems. And there was Tiny's enduring bitterness that Mohamed Al Fayed had acquired Harrods, the prize Tiny most desired.

Despite his Old Etonian airs, he was born Roland Walter Fuhrhop and had been a *scharführer* (troop-leader) in the Hitler Youth before his family moved to Britain in 1934. Although he adopted an English name, he was interned during the 1939-45 war under a regulation employed to round up fascists.

His rise began shortly after the war. He lived in Mayfair, dealing in cars and importing oranges from Algeria. But life took a decisive turn in 1948, when a business friend suggested that prospects looked splendid in what was then Rhodesia. It was an irresistible challenge.

After 10 years of farming and dealing with mining prospects, Tiny was spotted by an aristocratic entrepreneur, Angus Ogilvy. A new guiding hand was needed for Lonrho (the London and Rhodesia Mining and Land Company), which owned vast tracts of Rhodesia and held a healthy share portfolio in Britain. In 1961, Rowland was made joint managing director, alongside Alan Ball, a languid Old Etonian. From the outset, there was no doubting who called the shots.

The results were slow at first, then spectacular. By 1973, Lonrho's pre-tax profits were hitting £20 million; by 1980, they were £120 million. But the idyll did not last: in 1973, the great Lonrho boardroom battle erupted, over the mounting debts created by Rowland's more grandiose African schemes. It was the City sensation of the decade. Tiny won but he was now branded as an outsider and no longer welcome in the better sort of boardroom. There was solace in family life, with Josephine and their four children.



Rowland . . . vulnerable tycoon

One venture of Rowland's later years was the purchase of the Observer newspaper, in 1981. He was greeted with an hostility close to loathing, was allowed to interfere editorially, and left the paper — it was sold to the Guardian group in 1993 — even weaker than when he had acquired it.

Richard Hall

Roland "Tiny" Walter Rowland (Fuhrhop), businessman, born November 27, 1917; died July 24, 1998

Finding fame in 15 minutes

Alan Shepard

ALAN SHEPARD, the first American to be launched into space and the oldest astronaut ever sent to the Moon, has died at the age of 74. Though his countrymen made a tremendous fuss about his 15-minute flight from Cape Canaveral on May 5, 1961, it had already been thoroughly upstaged nearly a month earlier by the Soviet cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin's 90-minute circuit of the globe.

Shepard was a banker's son, born in East Derry, New Hampshire. He graduated from the US Naval Academy in 1944 and earned his naval wings in 1947. Twelve years later he found himself one of the seven men chosen to walk the tightrope of simultaneously training vigorously for the technical challenge of space flight, and of fulfilling the public relations requirements. Shepard coped by withdrawing into an icy correctness.

Eventually Shepard was picked as prime pilot for the first manned flight. On the day of the first US manned space shot he had to lie in his windowless capsule for more than four hours while the technicians sorted out one problem after another. As he waited he could feel his bladder growing steadily fuller.

No provision had been made for the inevitable consequence. When he finally conveyed his plight to ground control he was instructed to "do it in the suit". He took off praying fervently that he had done nothing disastrous to the mass of wiring running through the suit and the capsule. The flight lasted just 15 minutes, of which five were in space.

He was selected as commander of the 1971 Apollo 14 flight to the Moon at the age of 47. It was a sensitive mission after the near-disaster of Apollo 13, when the crew had to use the life-support system of the lunar module to get back to Earth. Clearly Nasa felt this 14th flight needed Shepard's dedication and reliability. He and Edgar Mitchell became the fifth and sixth humans to tread the Moon's surface.

Shepard was then promoted to rear admiral but left the project three years later. He then went into private business.

Harold Jackson

Alan Bartlett Shepard Jr, astronaut, born November 18, 1923; died July [illegible], 1998



Jarvis Cocker: charisma

Nerd charm offensive

POP

Caroline Sullivan

"IS THIS the way they say the future's meant to feel?" asked Jarvis Cocker as his hands, seemingly independent of the rest of his body, fluttered around his face.

For 20,000 people standing in a London field the question — the first line of Sorted For Es And Whizz — was not rhetorical. "Yes!" they screamed, and the trees encircling Finsbury Park quivered. It was proof that, despite disappointing sales of the This Is Hardcore album, Pulp are still one of Britain's important bands.

And despite the imminent death of the music industry as predicted by New Musical Express, they sold out this show, their largest UK headliner to date. It didn't hurt to have a strong supporting cast that included Bernard Butler, Bentley Rhythm Ace and Catatonia. But most of the crowd were there for Pulp, who spent their first 10 years playing joints a thirtieth of this size.

The past five years have brought stardom, two chart-topping albums and, the ultimate accolade, a Jarvis impersonator on Stars In Their Eyes. This gig was both a celebration of those five years and a stocktaking, particularly for Cocker, who's keen to pursue a full-time career as a film director. Pop can ill-afford to lose a star of such bounteously nerdy charisma.

He was in full Jarvisy effect, from snug Polyester shirt with its coyly undone top button to twitching, birdlike fingers and eyes that widened in shock as if he couldn't believe he'd just sung: "Now I don't care who you're screwing, as long as you save a piece for me." Jarvis was *so* Jarvis, it was as if he'd honed his mannerisms by watching the Stars In Their Eyes guy. As he flopped around to the downbeat opener, The Fear, one wondered if he ever tires of being himself.

The probable answer is no, or at least not last Saturday as he took in the size of the audience and asked in that laconic Sheffield accent, "Where did *you* all come from?" He may be as famous as he'd ever hoped, but he still sang about alienation like he meant it, the skinny school weirdo in him dominating the 34-year-old man.

The rest of Pulp, accustomed to second-banana status, adeptly got on with recreating the discontent of This Is Hardcore and the coming-of-age wryness of the masterful Different Class LP. If Cocker has become a cliché, he's a ferociously good one.

Classic performance in the lap of luxury

OPERA

Edward Greenfield

IT WAS 25 years ago that Dame Kiri Te Kanawa began her Glyndebourne career, singing the Countess in Mozart's **Figaro**; this time it was the other Countess, the central figure in Strauss's last opera, **Capriccio**, presented once more in John Cox's classic production.

It says much for the artistry of Dame Kiri, not to mention Glyndebourne tradition, that this was a performance which evoked Straussian magic through superb teamwork. Andrew Davis drew incandescent sounds from the London Philharmonic Orchestra, prompting Dame Kiri not only to sing gloriously but to give a portrayal that, in its moving vulnerability, shed new light on the central figure. With her sensuous acting she brought out many new facets of this complex character, a heroine called on to choose between words and music, as personified in her two lovers, Olivier and Flamand.

It was Cox's inspiration 25 years ago to re-use Dennis Lennon's set of the previous 18th century production and update it to the 1920s. In an age of gimmicks, the device works its magic, setting the contrasted characters in perspective against an already distanced atmosphere of aristocratic luxury.

The team of soloists is shrewdly chosen. Gerald Finley as Olivier and Richard Croft as Flamand are well-matched as the two rivals. The Los Angeles-based baritone Rodney Gilfry, as the Count, also sings with fine Mozartian point, while the Wagnerian tones of the German baritone Victor von Halem, as La Roche, provide aptly stentorian contrast.

And the element of send-up in the subtle libretto is very well caught, with Kathryn Harries as the actress Clairon, and Jennifer Rhys-Davies and Bonaventura Bottone even more over-the-top as the pair of Italian singers.

The magic of Glyndebourne is never more powerful than when, as here, you have a country-house opera set in a country-house.

Tim Ashley adds from the Buxton festival: It is easy to understand, as you listen to **La Finta Semplice**, how the Amadeus myth — the idea of Mozart as the musical vessel of some unearthly power — came into being. The piece seems almost unreal. It was his first full-length opera; he wrote it when he was 12. Some of its stylistic elements are, it has to be said, derivative; there is more than a whiff of Handel. What really unnerves, however, is the opera's almost freakish wisdom. Mozart, at 12, was already capable of portraying a complex emotional, social and moral world not that so far removed from The Marriage Of Figaro or Cosi Fan Tutte.

La Finta Semplice uncannily preempts his later works, both in its vision of the ambivalent dependence between aristocrats and servants and in its portrayal of a manipulative emotional game that goes hideously wrong. The misogynistic Cassandro refuses to allow his sister, Giacinta, to marry the flamboyant army officer, Fracasso. Egged on by their two servants, the lovers persuade Fracasso's glamorous, intelligent sister Rosina to impersonate a ditsy airhead in the hope that her seductive powers might break Cassandro's resolve.

Unfortunately, Rosina manages to arouse the passions of Cassandro's genuinely thick, but lovable brother, Polidoro, as well. Halfway through you realise with an awful shock that the dense emotional tangle is unresolvable without pain. The ending is nasty: Rosina, hitherto sympathetic, is suddenly revealed as a woman acting with cruel calculation; Polidoro, rejected by everyone else, winds up alone.

The Buxton festival has done the piece proud. Aidan Lang's production hauls it forward in time to the turn of the century, eliding Mozart with Wilde. The set is an Edwardian topiary garden where enormous sculptured hands appear to control the characters and trees rear upwards with phallic suggestiveness. Cassandro is an affluent ne'er-do-well, who is doubtless capable of the occasional bit of Bunburying. Rosina's ermine wraps mark her out as a *femme du monde*, and Janis Kelly triumphs in the part, spinning out the taxing vocal lines with sumptuous assurance; it is an outstanding performance in a show where no one, musically, puts a foot wrong.

I doubt whether there has been a better Cassandro than Jonathan Best, though the real star of the evening is Paul Nilon as Polidoro. Irritatingly nerdy to begin with, he gradually engages your sympathy until, in the final scene, he proves simply heartbreaking. He is vocally flawless, emerging as one of the finest Mozart tenors to appear in Britain for some time.



Kiri Te Kanawa . . . glorious in Capriccio PHOTOGRAPH: [illegible]

Terfel's triumph of diabolic intensity

THE PROMS

Andrew Clements

A BIG choral work traditionally kicks off the Proms. But Berlioz's *The Damnation of Faust* was a particularly canny choice, straddling no less than three of the season's main themes. One of them is the supernatural and music's powers to evoke it; another is choral music itself, with a whole day devoted to choirs and choruses of all complexions. And a third is opera and music theatre, which has been a burgeoning part of Proms programming in recent years.

Berlioz's "dramatic legend" cuts across both those genres. It doesn't sit totally happily on the stage, while in the concert hall some of its more theatrical episodes seem to cry out for visual expansion.

This account was played perfectly straight, though the way in which the baritone Bryn Terfel sprang into life every time Berlioz's score signalled Mephistopheles' arrival, did provide its own tiny *frisson*. Terfel was also the main generator of the evening's diabolic intensity. The part is made for him, with its moments of sweet, insinuating charm alternating with terrifying, implacable power. He delivers it all with the authority and the timing of a master craftsman, and is willing to live dangerously at times, fining down his sound to the merest pianissimo even in such a huge, threatening space as London's Albert Hall.

But Andrew Davis's attempts to create the same sense of danger with the baton were less successful; Berlioz needs to be balanced on a knife-edge, and sometimes Davis seemed to over-prettify the music, which is too raw-boned, too densely packed with unspoken emotions for that kind of refinement, and the playing of the BBC Symphony Orchestra was never quite assertive enough to give it the full sense of the surreal this extraordinary musical hybrid needs.

Yet there was full-blooded singing from the chorus and from the other three soloists. David Rendall stepped into the part of Faust at short notice when the original tenor fell ill, and sustained the part elegantly; Donald Maxwell filled the cameo of Brander and his song with robust earthiness, and Ann Murray as Marguerite made the most of the score's tenderest music. For all Terfel's wizardry, her account of "D'amour l'ardente flamme" was the evening's heartstopping moment.

Zoroastre is not only the first Rameau opera to be heard at the Proms in its entirety, but also the British premiere of the complete score, the 1749 *tragédie lyrique* that William Christie and Les Arts Florissants presented so lovingly last week.

It's a heavily larded fable of Masonic symbolism (the librettist Louis de Cahusac was a member of the French Grand Lodge, and the composer was almost certainly a mason, too), in which the forces of good and evil battle for control over the Middle Eastern kingdom of Bactria. Zoroastre himself is the epitome of all that is right in the masonic world: he has to survive a series of challenges before emerging triumphant against the villainous Abramane.

If it is pantomime plotting, the imagery of the text is wonderfully rich, and the protagonists are sharply characterised in Rameau's exquisite vocal writing and in the dances and masques that punctuate each of the five acts.

Christie always conducts Rameau with the energy and zeal of a musical missionary, giving punch to the rhythms and a tang to the instrumental effects from an orchestra that includes very early versions of the clarinet. And the singers were beautifully cast and prepared, with the tenor Mark Padmore as Zoroastre, the Clark Kent of the 18th century, and the bass Clive Bayley as a dark, sonorous Abramane. The other singers were French, with Gaelle Méchaly exquisite in the high soprano writing for Amélite.

It was an absorbing and often ravishingly beautiful evening of stylish baroque singing.

The God sex guide

TELEVISION

Nancy Banks-Smith

ITV IS not noted for comedy. Its motto has long been (as they used to say in EastEnders) "Don't make me chuckle!" Now it has come up with a real corker. *Holy Smoke!* (ITV) is a funky new God-slot presented by Anna Richardson, who is described as a vivacious vicar's daughter. She is sitting on an inflatable, pink plastic sofa. I'd quite have liked to see the vivacious vicar himself but, in her own tousle-haired way, Anna is quite bouncy enough. Or perhaps it is the sofa. "Welcome to Holy Smoke!" she said. "The perfectly heavenly excuse to assume the missionary position and bare your beliefs!" The emphasis, you will have spotted, is going to be on sex. A woman in a dog collar said: "If sex was purely for procreation, God wouldn't have created a clitoris."

Anna was back. "God's been getting a pretty bad press recently. They say He's old hat, out of touch and well past his sell-by date. Has The Big Man gone to meet his maker?" I remembered rather wistfully Michael Parkinson's Finest Minute. He had started reading some ill-written tosh but suddenly stopped with: "I'm not going to say this!" If The Big Man hasn't gone to meet his maker, He will chalk that up to Parkinson for virtue.

A vicar, who used to be in advertising and I can't say I'm amazed, discussed whether God was dead as a dodo, dead funky or dead to the world. The camera seemed to be having hysterics.

Holy Smoke! has a celebrity spot for lesser-known celebrities. "Every week we persuade a celebrity to spill their spiritual beans in our confession box. You may think Melinda Messenger is just a page three bimbo whose cups runneth over, but she's got a lot more to get off her chest than that." Melinda said she was a Buddhist. Fame and fortune did not matter to her. The camera was now making pelvic thrusts. You wonder what sort of smoke the show was on.

I rather liked the Muslim hip-hop group, who refused to play anywhere there was alcohol. So, bless 'em, they seemed to be performing in a lift and an underground car park. And I can't wait to meet Wendy, who saw the face of Jesus in a nightclub mirror telling her to set up a TV channel. Which she did.

Holy Smoke! is timed to catch young drunks who, as the series producer explains, have been down the pub wrestling with questions like "What's it all about?"

Duck Patrol (ITV) is a comedy as relaxed as the elastic in an old pair of bloomers.

It is set in the deep green and bright blue upper reaches of the Thames, where progress has never penetrated and the police launch chugs along at a couple of chuckles an hour.

Here be sirens, moonlighting as landladies with a nice hotpot in a slow oven for a hungry man. It won't set the Thames on fire. Indeed, it could lower your blood pressure.

Little White Lies (BBC1) was awash with drowned cats — one down the loo; one in a water butt — so the producer moved quickly to reassure us that they were all right really. He didn't say how Peter Bowles (who was whacked with a rock) or Cherie Lunghi (who jumped off the roof) were feeling.

In this sort of psychological thriller the heroine, always young, always pretty, sometimes blind, is beset by terrors, threats, dreams and doubts. Tara FitzGerald, suddenly widowed, was a more spirited heroine than most. She showed a vivid interest in where her money had gone. And, for that matter, in her handyman.

The metronome of suspicion tick-tocked this way and that. I enjoyed Peter Bowles's diatribe about his wife. He said, bitterly: "Julia's whole life is a lie. She has this pathological craving for attention. A bottomless pit of need to be the centre of attention. Everybody talking about her . . . watching her . . . wondering what she's going to say or do next."

Yes, but aren't we describing an actor here?

In fact, Julia leaped to her death, crying: "Are you watching?" Well, were you?

Violence is golden

CINEMA

Richard Williams

AS IT slips back and forth in time, freezing an image or a moment of silence, drawing the audience into the elliptical rhythms of its free-associative meditation on love and death, Takeshi Kitano's **Hana-Bi** seems to rinse the eyes and rinse the ears. To say that this seldom happens in the cinema is an understatement, and suggests the extent of Kitano's achievement. Hana-Bi, winner of the Golden Lion at last year's Venice festival, is some cop movie.

Let's say straight away that, this being 1998, some of us will be tempted to shut our eyes and stop our ears in order to block out the sight of chopsticks being rammed into a gangster's eye or the off-screen sound of heads being kicked. But those who have serious qualms about the exploitation of aggressive behaviour elsewhere in contemporary cinema may nevertheless find Kitano an altogether more worthwhile proposition since, compared with someone like Abel Ferrara, the Japanese director actually has something to say.

Working from his own script, Kitano — in the guise of his thespian alter ego, Beat Takeshi, a popular figure on Japanese TV — plays Nishi, a veteran policeman who has left the force after an episode in which his partner was crippled, a younger colleague was killed, and Nishi emptied his revolver into the face of their killer. We aren't told whether he retired or was sacked; the film is more interested in the consequence.

Nishi's taciturnity makes Harvey Keitel look like Jerry Lewis. Sometimes his only means of expression seems to be the involuntary flicker of an eyelid, a twitching muscle that betrays the residue of his humanity: in Kitano's phrase, Nishi was "born cold", and his outbursts of violence with gun, knife and fist are made to seem like deformed attempts at communication.

Tragedy shrouds him. His five-year-old daughter is dead; his wife is terminally ill. He stares into the abyss and, like an anti-hero from an American film noir of the forties, doggedly clinging to an old-fashioned code of honour, glimpses the possibility of redemption. With the proceeds of an elaborately prepared solo bank robbery, he plans a second honeymoon for his wife (Kayoko Kishimoto), who longs to revisit the mountains. And to the crippled Horibe (Ren Osugi), further disabled by the departure of his own wife and child, Nishi presents a set of artists' materials.

The paints and brushes don't solve Horibe's problems, but they do give him a new way of connecting with the world. His paintings appear throughout the film, used as a kind of frieze, suggesting the possibility of transcendence.

In its moving pictures, too, this is an extraordinarily beautiful film, although never emptily or distractingly so. Hideo Yamamoto, the cinematographer, borrows the hard, high lighting of a certain genre of contemporary art photography and finds a more powerful use for its emotionally uninflected surface.

Many individual frames and sequences engrave themselves on the memory. A pair of elastic-sided plimsolls on a tiled floor. A wooden puzzle, half-completed. The neon of a bayside city at night.

OF COURSE, it may be just the exotic flavour of Kitano's cultural references that persuades us of the integrity of this contrapuntal essay in lyricism and brutality. But the violence of Hana-Bi has a dramatic justification, and the story and its moral framework could not exist without it.

Between the silent and the brutal, the oblique and the elegant, however, there is also tenderness and comedy. Opening the parcel from Nishi, Horibe finds, alongside the paints and brushes, an artist's beret. When Nishi and his wife pose for their automatic camera, someone walks across the shot. And few cinematic silences can have been more movingly eloquent than that shared by the couple as they sit together on the shore, she fishing, his eyes restless, their lives winding down.

Not the least of the attractions of The Daytrippers, a US indie film written and directed by first-timer Greg Mottola, is its inclusion of something described by one of the characters as "the world's shortest car chase", a miniature masterpiece of automotive ineptitude. But then this is a funny, charming and thoroughly intelligent movie, in which a Long Island family rallies round its elder daughter, Eliza (Hope Davis), after she has discovered a compromising note among the belongings of her husband, Louis (Stanley Tucci), and heads for his Manhattan office one winter's day to find out the truth.

Davis is the bemused centre around which the film spins. Parker Posey plays Jo, her funky little sister; Liev Schreiber is Joe's smug boyfriend; Anne Meara is her ditsy mother and Pat McNamara her grumpy dad. Various Downtown grotesques are cleverly sketched, and the two sisters walk off into the sunset on the back of the best last line in ages.



Lady of the lake . . . Kayoko Kishimoto in Hana-Bi

Around the world in 80 plays

British and Irish plays are taking the world by storm, writes **Lyn Gardner**

PAM GEMS and Caryl Churchill are big in Japan, Philip Ridley's plays are a success in Finland, and Edward Bond is considered by the French to be the most important playwright in the English language.

Ben Elton's Popcorn may not have gone down too well in Greece, but it was a big hit in Paris and has been sold to 20 other countries. Then there's Martin McDonagh. Unheard of three years ago, his Beauty Queen Of Leenane has been translated into 22 languages and sold to 28 countries. He is as celebrated in Latvia and Estonia as he is on Broadway.

"Agents can hardly keep up with the demand. There's been a tremendous response to the boom in younger writers from Britain and Ireland," says the Royal Court's literary manager, Graham Whybrow.

Theatres such as the Royal Court, which spot new talent, don't derive any benefit from the sale of foreign rights to plays they stage. But, as Whybrow points out, they are more than happy to help promote playwrights' wares in any way they can, because the publishing of text and productions of the plays abroad is increasingly a major source of income for young writers.

There are clearly differences of national taste. Gregory Motton, whose uncompromising, expressionistic plays are mostly seen in studio spaces in Britain, is revered as a major writer and given main house productions in France. Conversely, until Skylight — which has become a worldwide hit — David Hare's plays didn't have huge appeal in the rest of Europe. Somehow you can't imagine the Catholic Spanish getting to grips with Racing Demon, his essay on the malaise of the Church of England.

The lack of a strong, well-developed play-writing culture in many other countries accounts in part for the British and Irish success. But often it is not just the English language play in general but a playwright or play in particular that strikes a chord. Ayub Khan-Din's East Is East, a comedy about a mixed race Anglo-Pakistani family, has gone down well in Germany, which has a large Turkish population and where people understand the resulting cultural collisions.

The translation of any play is a leap in the dark. Most playwrights and their agents are reliant on strongly worded contracts that forbid substantive changes, and the expertise and goodwill of agents and licensees. But changes that happen in translation are nothing compared with the changes that can creep into a production of a play.

In some cases, the changes only benefit the play: a Dutch production of Hare's Skylight recently transposed the play to an Amsterdam suburb with great success. But Ben Elton had his breath taken away by a German production of Gasping which had an entirely different ending to the one he had written.

For the majority of writers, the fact that the work might be tampered with is a risk worth taking. After all, ignorance is bliss when those royalty cheques keep rolling in.

We've been to this marvellous party

Lynn Barber

Everybody Was So Young: A Lost Generation Love Story
by Amanda Vaill
Little, Brown 468pp £22.50

GERALD and Sara Murphy belong to the fluffiest of categories — famous for being friends of the famous — so you might well wonder if they deserve such a substantial biography. In this case, the answer is yes, but you hope that publishers won't make a habit of it. Gerald had some small success as a painter and ballet designer in the twenties, but the Murphys' main claim to fame is that they were the models for Dick and Nicole Diver in Tender Is The Night.

When Scott Fitzgerald first met them in 1924, they seemed the perfect couple — rich, cultured Americans summering on the Riviera with their small children, hosting memorable parties at their Villa America above Antibes. Fitzgerald was not the only one to succumb to their charm: Picasso painted Sara as "The Woman in White"; Hemingway portrayed her as Helen in The Snows Of Kilimanjaro; Dorothy Parker loved her enough to follow her into exile on a Swiss alp. One of their friends, the poet Archie MacLeish, wrote that: "There was a shine to life wherever they were: not a decorative added value but a kind of revelation of inherent loveliness."

But later, Fitzgerald talked about the Murphys' "performances" — he came to see, as Rosemary sees in Tender, that there was a dark secret at the heart of their marriage. Everyone agreed that Sara was lovely, warm and intelligent as well as beautiful. But Gerald? He was certainly witty and amusing and in the twenties looked promising as a painter, but Fitzgerald and Hemingway both wondered — was he a fruit? He dressed too well; he spoke too ornately, he was rather over keen on fancy dress. Hemingway said that he felt around Gerald as someone who hates cats feels around cats.

It was an improbable marriage in so many ways — he almost penniless, Boston Irish Catholic, she one of the famous Wiborg sisters, daughters of an Ohio millionaire. She was 32 when they married in 1916, practically an old maid, and five years older than Gerald. But they had been friends since he was a schoolboy, and gradually, through correspondence, their friendship deepened into love. Gerald always knew that he had what he called a "defect" — he felt awkward in all-male company; he was wary of friendship because he felt like an impostor. He half-confided his problem to Sara; she was sympathetic; it may have helped that each had a lesbian sister.

At all events, Gerald was profoundly relieved when he found in Sara Wiborg not only an aesthetic soulmate but a woman he could physically respond to. He told her in one letter: "You have kept alive the man in me." His confidence was further boosted by the births of their three children — he adored being a father. But years later, he confided to a friend: "My life has been a process of concealment of the personal realities."

Sustained by the Wiborg millions, they studied art in Paris and painted sets for the Ballets Russes and got to know Picasso and Léger. Gerald exhibited with the Salon des Independents and his paintings (vaguely futurist, of machinery) were well reviewed. And then, in 1923, Cole Porter invited them down to Antibes out of season, and they transformed an old farmhouse into the Villa America and invited all their friends to stay. Until the Murphys' arrival, the Riviera was known mainly as a winter resort for elderly English invalids, but they made it young, chic and fashionable.

In fact, the Riviera idyll lasted only a few summers. It began to crack under the strain of Scott's drunkenness, Zelda's madness, Hemingway's jealousy, but then it was wrecked definitively in 1929 when the Murphys' younger son Patrick was diagnosed with tuberculosis, and the whole family had to move to Switzerland. (Dorothy Parker proved a surprising brick in joining their exile on the "Goddamn alp".) They moved back to America, where Gerald had inherited his father's leather goods business, or what he called "that monument to the inessential", the Marr Cross company.

Sara meanwhile lived with Patrick in a TB village in the Adirondacks. But while Patrick was slowly dying of tuberculosis, lightning struck twice — their elder son Baoth contracted what seemed to be an ear infection but which turned out to be meningitis, and died within a week. Patrick lingered on for another two years, dying soon after his sixteenth birthday.

The Murphys wrote to the Hemingways: "We try to be like what you want us to be", but inevitably, the magic was gone. Hemingway delivered his verdict in A Moveable Feast: "They were bad luck to people but they were worse luck to themselves and they lived to have all their bad luck finally; and to the very worst end that all bad luck could go." Gerald died of cancer in 1964; Sara in 1975.

Such is Amanda Vaill's skill — and it is almost incredible that this is her first book — that she makes what might have been a mere literary footnote into an enthralling and deeply moving narrative.



Sara and Gerald Murphy, famous for being friends of the famous

If you would like to order this book at the special price of £20 contact CultureShop (see ad on page 29)

Arguing the literary toss

Nicholas Lezard

Writing to the Moment: Selected Critical Essays 1980-1996
by Tom Paulin
Faber 336pp £9.99 pbk

I REMEMBER, when studying literature at university, being made to think that politics and literature belonged in separate spheres; that the former was a kind of dead tissue which would turn the latter gangrenous. This didn't seem unreasonable at the time (the early 1980s): "politics", when it surfaced in discussions of literature, often meant either a completely deranged leftism that made nonsense of the subjects it dealt with, or a kind of worthy, grinding insistence on principle that flattened out ambiguities and ignored internal conflicts.

In short, I wish I had read T. Paulin's stuff then, for here is a critic who is both sensitive to nuance in poetry, and yet steeped enough in politics to show that writers — even those not thought of as politically concerned (eg, Gerard Manley Hopkins) — do not exist in a vacuum. And neither does a leftwing position guarantee that what a critic says will be worth hearing: Paulin quotes David Hare, writing on Raymond Williams: "the critical spirit is alive and well in his buoyantly intelligent prose — it's in exasperated contrast with the claggy dreariness of Williams's writing."

Some may be shocked at the lack of reverence Paulin accords Williams, but this comes up in a series of newspaper articles, collected here under the title "The Critic at the Breakfast Table", which deal in literary/cultural snapshots, such as David Lodge's "Masterclass" and Hare's bewilderment at Williams could serve as Paulin's own watchword. "How could this highly sophisticated man not see that unless he laid his thoughts out clearly and simply in everyday language, he had no chance of reaching the very people whose interests he sought to advance?"

Explaining the title of this section, he says "there is something provisional, off-hand, spontaneous, risky in this volatile mindset — it seeks but never finds absolutely definitive judgments. It is in dialogue or argument with the world, and closely related to the diary entry and the familiar letter."

But this is not mere journalism. In "The British Presence in Ulysses" he brilliantly unearths Joyce's (necessarily) sly anti-imperialism, and in so doing makes Ulysses seem even more brilliantly inclusive than we already thought it was (saying something both new and true about a great book is a hallmark of critical excellence); in "Paisley's Progress" he compels us to take this Ulster demagogue rather more seriously. (Reading Paulin is more or less essential for those who wish to get a firm grip on the Northern Ireland question; even in 1982, he could anxiously look forward to "a way of writing history that is neither Orange nor Green, but is instead as white as the middle band of the Irish tricolour".)

He makes a good case for Anthony Julius's devastating re-examination of T S Eliot, while still saluting Eliot's poetry. In short, Paulin's writing is both tasty and good for you; and if you didn't know or care that much about poetry before you read this, you certainly will afterwards.

Demotic utterances make way for fairytales

Alan Taylor

Near Neighbours
by Gordon Legge
Cape 218pp £9.99 pbk

Pandora's Box
by Alice Thompson
Little, Brown 160pp £12.99

CONTEMPORARY Scottish fiction has two dominant strands. First and most forceful is that practised by graduates of the Kelman Academy in Demotic Utterance. Here we find urban Scotland at its most guttural, where the living certainly ain't easy and the *mise-en-scènes* are depressingly realised. This is the terrain of Trainspotting and How Late It Was, How Late; bleak schemes, used needles, state dependency, a recipe for nihilism. Gordon Legge, who spent the best part of a decade on the dole, knows it better than most.

Second, there is what might be called, with due deference to Dame Muriel Spark, the Marcia Blaine School for Magical Caledonians, where the students — Candia McWilliam, Angela Carter (her father was Scottish), A L Kennedy and, now, Alice Thompson — seem to work in parallel universes, leaping trapeze-like from humdrum domesticity into myth, ballad, fairytale, Bildungsroman, road movie, epic, the highest flights of sublime fantasy.

Different as they undeniably are, both Legge and Thompson demonstrate a cheering contempt for tradition. Legge locates most of his short stories in and around the West Lothian town of Grangemouth, midway between Edinburgh and Glasgow, a perfect symbol for limbo.

Asked what he does all day, the narrator of "Life on a Scottish Council Estate" replies: "I stay in as much as I can, play records. Sometimes I go over to the library." And he is one of the more dynamic ones. In this incestuous backwater, no one has much money and everyone has little prospect of escape. Conversation revolves around pop music, gigs, girlfriends, football.

There is an airlessness to these stories that is reminiscent of Beckett. Legge is gentler and wittier than Irvine Welsh, his humour grey rather than black; there is no sense of his characters railing against their lot. They do not have the imagination to be resentful. A day trip to Glasgow, 20 miles away, is an expedition. Sex is absent and drugs are not top priority. This is life lived episodically, as if in retirement, if there was any work to retire from.

Pandora's Box is Alice Thompson's second novel, following Justine which won the James Tait Black prize.

One night in the middle of a storm, Dr Noah Close opens his door and finds a young woman on fire standing before him. She has no name and no history and she can't speak — "Even her body language was silent". Noah, who is "in love with the empirical world", soon discovers that his gift from the gods, Pandora, shortly to be his wife, is a mixed blessing. For a man used to the verities of science, for whom the human body was his faith, he must now come to terms with the fact there is "no room for the real". However, what starts out as an exploitation of a myth soon metamorphoses into a thriller when Pandora is brutally murdered. Noah employs a detective called Venus Budge who has one clue to go on — Pandora has been receiving letters with the enigmatic message "do not be afraid of what you want".

Thompson's aim is ambitious and expertly executed. She wants "to get to the bottom of wonder". Hers is a world in which nothing is what it seems, in which genders collide, landscapes melt into fantasylands, and clichés transcend their banality. No wonder Noah feels as if he is sinking.

But in the search for the solution to "life's sweet mystery", Thompson has sculpted a novella of disturbing elegance and profound grace, a beautifully articulate and optimistic expression of our confusion.

It's all in the mind

Peter Strawson

The Routledge Encyclopaedia of Philosophy
edited by Edward Craig
Routledge 10 vols £1,695

THIS is a unique achievement and a great one. The planning, organisation and execution of the project are masterly. Edward Craig, as general officer in charge of the whole vast enterprise, wisely divided his cares, appointing some 30 subordinate commanders each with his or her own special area of expertise: as, for example, ancient, medieval, 17th century philosophy; Indian, Islamic, Chinese philosophy; ethics, mathematical logic, epistemology, mind, law; and so on.

Even more wisely he avoided the risk of compartmentalisation by having all entries arranged in alphabetical order of head word.

The choice of individual contributors, who numbered more than 1,200, rested with the 30 subject editors; and the number of entries, which range from many pages to a few paragraphs, exceeds 2,000. From conception to completion, the operation has taken little more than seven years. Philosophers who turn to the names of writers with whose works they regard themselves as well acquainted, or to topics on which they have well developed views, will generally find lucid and balanced accounts of their author or subject.

They will, of course, often feel that more could and should be said or that emphases should have been different. Sometimes, and not infrequently, on the other hand, they will think that the task could hardly have been better performed.

Beyond these, there are many other areas with which contact is likely to be even more tangential or fortuitous. So it generally is, except for specialists, in the case of the wide fields of medieval European and classical Indian thought. Here, as in ancient philosophy, the Encyclopaedia offers riches indeed; so much so that there is a strong temptation to become quite absorbed in, and dazzled by, the range, variety, power, subtlety and, in many cases, analytic sophistication of the work of these thinkers and to spend hours with these volumes trying to satisfy an appetite that grows the more it is indulged.

None of the above, however, gives an adequate idea of what is probably the most distinctive feature of the whole work, namely what the editor modestly refers to as its "inclusiveness". Certainly, and obviously, as he remarks in his preface, given the nature both of philosophy itself and of the main market for the encyclopaedia, the work had to include a full and detailed coverage of the subject as understood by the English-speaking academic mainstream. But that was no reason for not aiming at comprehensiveness; especially given the broadening of academic interest, in recent decades, into regions of thought which had been or had seemed unduly neglected, or simply unfashionable, or suspect and dubious, or too newly canvassed, or simply too remote.

Such comprehensiveness is here truly achieved — and without condescension, without representing the remoter areas in the light in which they might initially be viewed from the conservative centre of the mainstream. This could only be done by the selection of subject editors for whom such areas were of central concern.

So, besides Indian, Islamic and Chinese philosophy, already mentioned, we have Japanese, Korean, Tibetan, Jewish, Arabic, African, Latin American and Russian. Crucial concepts and developments in the natural and formal sciences are dealt with.

It is shown how familiar areas such as the philosophy of mind and the philosophy of language have to reckon with new developments, such as the rise of cognitive science and new and sophisticated studies in syntax, semantics and pragmatics. Postmodernism, deconstruction, relativism, and late 20th century French philosophy get their due of attention; and there are 11 entries of which the opening head-word is "feminism" or "feminist". There is something in this encyclopaedia for everyone for whom the word "philosophy" has any resonance: the ardent amateur, the dilettante, the beginning student, the aspirant teacher, the seasoned professional.

'Really we're mostly yellow'

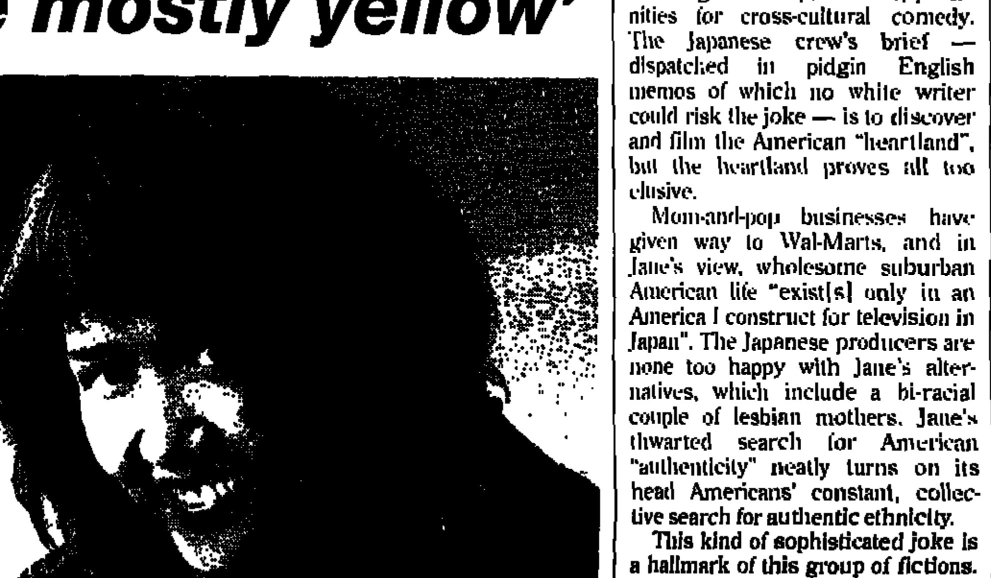
Sylvia Brownrigg celebrates a group of authors who are breaking down the cultural barriers

THE mostly white elementary school I went to in California, along with my friends the Chinese American sisters, generally seemed a peaceful place — until the day a furious boy called one of them a "nigger". Children are often both cruel and confused, and the boy obviously selected the worst, most violent racial epithet that came to mind.

A jumble of racial stereotypes is probably the norm for Asian Americans. They are called the "model minority" for their perceived ability to assimilate, and yet that invisibility has worked against them in the American cultural arena. There's a nicely comic moment in Ruth Ozeki's new novel, My Year Of Meat (Picador, £9.99), when Japanese American film-maker Jane Takagi-Little encounters a black Southerner's suspicion of her crew's request to film the Sunday service. "I don't think we ever had no white person inside of our church before . . ." the woman says, to which Jane's delicate response is: "Well, we're not technically white, Miss Helen. We're Japanese, so really we're mostly yellow."

Ozeki's spunky début novel — smart, funny, irreverent — is a good place to pick up on the story of the flowering of Asian American literature. I use "Asian American" here as Americans do; there's a legitimate complaint that considering Chinese, Japanese and Korean Americans together blurs important national distinctions, but in that country's charged racial debates you can't get anywhere without a handle, and that's the handle most people now use. ("Orientals" went out around the same time as "Negroes" and "Indians".) As Jane's Japanese mother says, "Name is face to all the world."

Ozeki is one of a cluster of talented writers now emerging that includes Gish Jen, Mei Ng, Chang-Rae Lee and Fae Myenne Ng. Whether this is a case of publishers belatedly discovering a pre-existing trend is hard to say, but what is clear is that there is starting to be an Asian American literary presence to match the more established traditions of black and Hispanic American fictions. And there is something of a shared style: these writers' take on American life is angled, fresh and often wry, and yet underscored by an awareness of the immigrant experiences in their own family histories.





Ruth Ozeki is one of a cluster of talented Asian American writers now emerging that includes Gish Jen, Mei Ng and Chang-Rae Lee

Ozeki's heroine Jane is a hybrid. Six-foot tall, half-Japanese and half-white, she has an early ambition to breed with someone black or Latin to maximise her child's racial gene pool. This is before she discovers her reproductive problems. Fertility is one of many themes in this complex novel, which recounts Jane's adventures criss-crossing the country with a Japanese crew, making documentaries for broadcast in Japan.

The weekly programme, sponsored by the American beef industry, is called My American Wife!, and features a wholesome wife cooking her family a great meat recipe (beef, preferably: "Pork is Possible, but Beef is Best!"). The narrative moves between Jane's story and that of downtrodden Japanese wife Akiko, via various detailed polemics on hormone and steroid use by American cattle farmers, and quotations from Shonagon's Pillow Book. The novel takes Jane through love, pregnancy, illness and disillusionment. By its end she is allowed a small triumph over corporate lies and has become a vegetarian.

It's a great set-up, rich in opportunities for cross-cultural comedy. The Japanese crew's brief — dispatched in pidgin English memos of which no white writer could risk the joke — is to discover and film the American "heartland", but the heartland proves all too elusive.

Mom-and-pop businesses have given way to Wal-Marts, and in Jane's view, wholesome suburban American life "exist[s] only in an America I construct for television in Japan". The Japanese producers are none too happy with Jane's alternatives, which include a bi-racial couple of lesbian mothers. Jane's thwarted search for American "authenticity" neatly turns on its head Americans' constant, collective search for authentic ethnicity.

This kind of sophisticated joke is a hallmark of this group of fictions. Gish Jen mines similar material in Mona In The Promised Land (Granta, £9.99), the story of a Chinese girl growing up in a mostly Jewish suburb of New York, who determines (to her parents' dismay) to convert to Judaism. In Jen's appealing, intelligent work the ethnic ironies fly thick and fast as Mona Chang negotiates life "in this, our country the melting pot — no, mosaic — no, salad bowl". When a foreign Asian student appears in class, Mona tries out her few words of Shanghai dialect on him — only to discover that the boy is Japanese. "Later on, people ask her how she can tell Chinese from Japanese. She shrugs. It's the kind of thing you just kind of know, she says. Oy!"

Jen's first novel, Typical American, started earlier in the Chang family history, telling of Mona's father's leaving Shanghai to study in the US as an engineer. But though this book has painful moments, Jen's tone remains lighter on the whole than that of Amy Tan, with whom she is inevitably compared. In exploring more myth-like stories, while keeping a humorous eye on the relations between American daughters and their Chinese mothers, the hugely successful Tan forms a bridge between these new writers and the godmother of them all, Maxine Hong Kingston. In 1976 Kingston's brilliant The Woman Warrior — her "Memoirs of a Girlhood among Ghosts", about growing up in a California Chinatown — became the first classic of Asian American literature.

Why are these writers mostly women? Other ethnic American fictions show more gender balance: for every Cristina Garcia or Sandra Cisneros there's an Oscar Hijuelos or Junot Diaz, while Toni Morrison and Alice Walker's great success is met by that of John Edgar Wideman or Charles Johnson. Hawaiian Chinese Norman Wong and Korean American Chang-Rae Lee have written strong fictions but don't yet have the visibility of these other writers. Ozeki's Jane refers to "the Asian-American Woman thing — we're reliable, loyal, smart but non-threatening. This is why we get to do so much newscasting in America." News anchor Connie Chung remains the most prominent Asian American in popular culture.

BEING women may account for thematic similarities in their work. Many focus on mothers and daughters and food, and the complex inter-relations among them. Frequently the Asian mothers, like Mona's, are amazed by their daughters' loud, confident voices: "We do not know who is this big mouth or where she got it from."

Ozeki in many ways breaks new ground in not dwelling on Jane's family, but taking on broader political issues: her novel is, as much as anything, an indictment of global capitalism, and of the distortions of television. By contrast, there is something pleasing in the fact that the traditionally told saga of the life of a Japanese geisha has been written by a white American male — Arthur Golden.

My childhood friend has gone on to become, like Jane Takagi-Little, a successful writer and documentarist. The name she presents to the world, with her film company? "Inscrutable Films." Sometimes, as these writers would seem to agree, irony is the best form of cultural revenge.

ILLUSTRATION: BARRY LARKING

Absent friends of summer

Paul Evans

SWALLOWS, swifts and martins — these restless spirits of summer bring a flash of joy when they arrive and leave a hole in the sky to be filled by winter when they leave. They share our world, nest in our buildings, but remain forever wild and unreachable.

Until the last century it was assumed that they buried themselves in the mud of lake beds in winter. Perhaps the reality of their migration, the huge distances travelled by such small wings seemed unbelievable.

Now it is my turn to take flight from familiar surroundings. I say goodbye to the fields at the back of our street and watch a little gang of house-martins diving and weaving along the old hedges. They are after the flies which, in the damp morning air, are concentrated low over the hawthorns and blackthorns. Here also the brown females of the common blue butterflies are patrolling their territories. For countless generations these birds have enacted this high-speed feeding game, so fast it makes the rest of the world appear to be moving in slow motion.

When the dust of removals settles some hours later, and I emerge from a mountain of packing cases, I'm 10 miles away, on the northern end of Wenlock Edge. Here another posse of martins whizz across the evening sky. It's hard to believe that something terrible has happened to Britain's summer population of house-martins.

Where they were once common in the south and east of England, where almost every building in a village had several nests, in many places there are none this year. What's going wrong? They seemed to be breeding in Britain well enough, so perhaps the problem lies in their African home or somewhere along their migration route. Is it pesticides causing a lack of food, or what? A similar crash in the number of migrating white throats occurred some years ago.

Because of the close ties between people and these birds over the centuries you'd think their absence would cause a national outcry. But no, there's hardly a murmur. Perhaps people are so saturated with stories of wildlife loss that they just accept that bird populations will dwindle, especially when these birds spend much of their year abroad. Perhaps we still half-believe they're sleeping in the mud somewhere.

Although numbers are down there is still a vibrant population of house-martins in these parts. As luck would have it, our new house has stereo house martins, or to be more accurate "bungalow" martins, with a nest on either eve. There's a lot of clearly accurate swooping and electric twittering all around us.

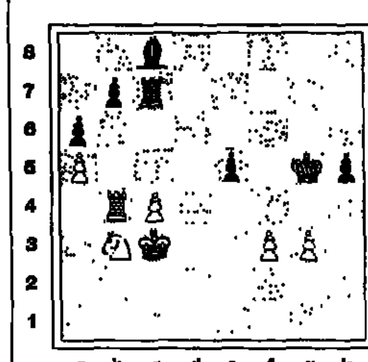
It's like being in a visible, audible magnetic field as the martins zoom through their Celtic knot patterns and dart in and out of their adobes stuck to the wall. Brilliant little constructions these, made of hundreds of tiny spitballs of grey mud into a shape like a teapot with a broken-off spout. In each nest a pair of chicks peer from the hole and chicker for food, impatient for the open skies and the great odyssey ahead of them.

Though the birds are destined to be landless, for the moment our house is their house. This marks one knot along the birds' ley line. Their restlessness earths this place below the wooded scarp of The Edge just as they do the top of the Wrekin rising in the north and the street I've just left below that. The other end, loose without them, stretches into the African south where they will take the summer and tie it there for another season. But will they come back, and what will happen to summer if they don't?

Chess Leonard Barden

TEENAGERS have swept the board in recent weeks in regional qualifiers for the Smith & Williamson British Championship at Torquay which started last weekend. There has always been a good UK tradition where our best talents such as Nigel Short, Michael Adams and Matthew Sadler made their national title debuts at a young age, and 1998 has seen the trend continue.

A few weeks ago Craig Hanley, aged 14, seemed established as this year's youngest qualifier when he drew with GM Keith Arkell and took the Heywood BC place; but then Lorin D'Costa, aged 13, scored a 210 grading result at Milton Keynes where he lost only to GM Jim Plaskett and beat two established internationals.



Bishop and rook pawn against knight are a potent endgame force. D'Costa (Black) surprised Miroslav Houska by *1...e4! 2 fxe4 Kg4 3 Nd4 Kxg3 4 Rb1 h4 5 Kd3 h3 6 Ne2+ Kf2 7 Rb2 h2 8 Nf4+ Kg3 9 Nh5+ Kh3 10 Nf4+ Kg4 when White gave up a piece by 11 Rxh2 Kxf4* and *resigned* a few moves later.

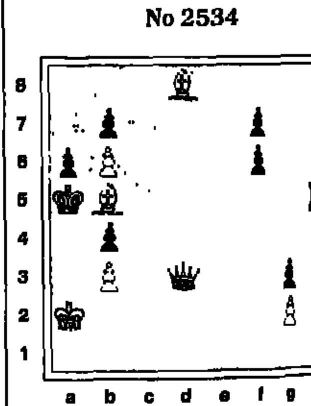
After D'Costa decided, with the agreement of the British Chess Federation, to hold over his BC place until 1999, preferring to try for a junior title this year, the Milton Keynes qualifying spot went to the next finisher, who is still younger.

Thomas Rendle, aged 11, from the chess town Hastings where computer firm Mountfield Software backs his promising career, will be the fourth youngest player ever in any national men's championship, beaten only by Arturo Pomar of Spain in 1943 and by Simon Buckley and Luke McShane in recent British contests. Earlier this year Rendle was first, at an under-12 international in the Czech Republic, winning the best game award.

T Rendle v D Szoen

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 e5 c5 4 c3 Nc6 5 Nf3 Qb6 6 Be2 cxd4 The testing move is Nh6. **7 cxd4 Bb4+** Black doesn't understand the position. Ne7-f5 or an early f7-f6 are better plans. **8 Nc3 Nge7 9 a3 Bxc3+ 10 bxc3 Bd7 11 0-0 Rc8 12 Bd3 Na5 13 Rb1 Qc7 14 Ng5!** White homes in on the weakened K-side. **Ng6 15 Qf3 Bc6 16 Qh5 Nf8 17 a4 h6 18 Ba3 g6 19 Qh3 Qd7 20 f4 Nc4 21 Bxf8 Kxf8 22 Bxg6! fxg6 23 Nxe6+ Kg8 24 f5 g5 25 Nc5 Qc7 26 f6 Be8 27 Rxb7 Resigns.**

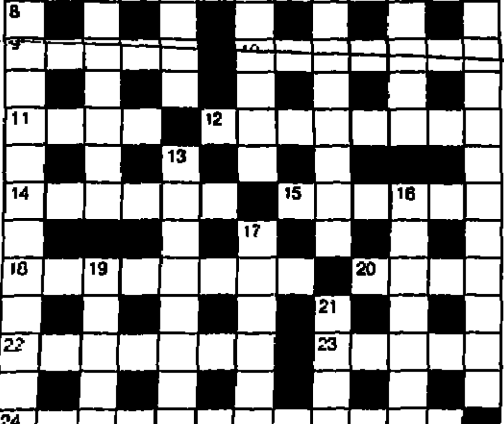
No 2534



White mates in four moves against any defence (by H O 1958). Test yourself against a reigning world champion in this diagram from a British Solving Championship which Jonathan Mestel was the only finalist to crack in the allotted 25 minutes.

No 2533: Drawn by 1 . . . Rb5! 2 Qf1+ Kc2 3 Qe1 Rb3 4 Ka2 Ra3+ Kxa3 stalemate. If 2 Qxb5 axb5 3 Ka2 (3a6? b4 4 a7 b3 5 a8Q b2 wins) Kc2 4 Ka3 Kc3 5 Ka2 draws.

Quick crossword no. 429



Across

1 Are in no doubt (4,4,4)
9 Armoured nosepiece (5)
10 Stress (7)
11 Man-eating giant (4)
12 Assign for a particular purpose (8)
14 Dent in the cheek (6)
15 Needlework (6)
18 Kind of paint (8)
20 Representation of Christ (4)
22 Lightest known metal (7)
23 Previous — community superior (5)
24 London thoroughfare noted for specialists (6,6)

Down

2 Quack medicine (7)
3 Droop (4)
4 Countless (6)
5 Person from capital — led Ron on (anag) (8)
6 Heather? — It's a girl's name! (5)
7 The aristocracy (6,6)
8 Free from illness (2,4,6)
13 Jamaica pepper (8)
16 Ramp (7)
17 Universe as an ordered system (6)
19 Speak (5)
21 Box — girder (4)

Last week's solution

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STRIFE IMPAIR
E E A   E W O
LABEL COMPACT
D O S A E R T
OPULENT NIECE
M N   A T   R
 DECOMPOSE
L   A A   V H
ADIEU REQUIRE
U N T A U D C
RUFFIAN INERT
E K O   E N I
LARYNX STATIC
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Bridge Zia Mahmood

LAST month's Junior European championships were held in the Austrian capital of Vienna. Great Britain was represented by Martin Jones and David Bakhshi, Graham Hazell and Jon Green, Paula Leslie and Suzanne Cohen — the first time that a female partnership has represented Britain in any kind of Open competition at European level.

The Junior European championships are held every two years, and the 1996 event took place in Cardiff. Norway were the winners, with Russia second and Denmark third. The Scandinavian countries invariably produce very strong junior teams, but the emergence of Russia as a power on the bridge scene is particularly encouraging. That the standard is very high indeed can be seen from the deal in the next column, where a Turkish declarer produced a piece of magic straight from the Arabian Nights.

West's fearless intervention, typical of the aggressive approach to bidding in the junior game, enabled East to compete in clubs and push North-South to an uncomfortable level.

North-South vulnerable, dealer North:

North
♠ A965
♥ J952
♦ A32
♣ A9

West
♠ J84
♥ A1063
♦ 97
♣ Q1074

East
♠ Q2
♥ 874
♦ KQ85
♣ KJ32

South
♠ K1073
♥ KQ
♦ J1064
♣ 865

South	West	North	East
		1♦	Pass
1♠	1NT(1)	2♠	3♣
3♠	Pass	Pass	Pass

(1) Hearts and clubs

South won the club lead with the ace and led a heart to the king and West's ace. West switched to a diamond, ducked in dummy and won by East with the queen. East played a club, taken by West, and another diamond was taken by the ace in dummy. Declarer, Ercan Aydin, played a heart to the queen, ruffed a club in dummy, cashed the jack of hearts, and ruffed a heart in his hand. This left the following position:

North
♠ A96
♥ None
♦ 3
♣ None

West
♠ J84
♥ None
♦ None
♣ Q

East
♠ Q2
♥ None
♦ K
♣ K

South
♠ K107
♥ None
♦ J
♣ None

South appears to have to lose a trump and a diamond for one down. But Aydin placed the jack of diamonds on the table, and his trump loser vanished in a puff of smoke! East did his best by winning with the king of diamonds and leading a club, but South ruffed with the seven, overruffed West's jack with dummy's ace, and finessed the 10 of spades for his contract.

Motor Racing Austrian Grand Prix

It's McLarens at the double

Alan Henry in Spielberg

MIKA HAKKINEN put the brakes on Michael Schumacher's world championship ambitions here last Sunday as the McLaren-Mercedes team returned en masse to the winner's rostrum for the first time since Monaco two months ago.

It was the Finn's sixth Formula One victory, a success made doubly sweet for McLaren by the Scot David Coulthard who recovered strongly to take second place after a first-lap accident which had again threatened to put paid to his chances.

With 10 rounds now completed and six to go — or seven, if rumours of an additional race at Spain's Jerez circuit in October prove true — Hakkinen now leads Schumacher by eight points.

Having qualified in a frustrating 14th place, Coulthard was badly squeezed in a traffic jam at the second corner and was pitched into a spin by Pedro Diniz's out-of-control Arrows. As if to add insult to injury, as Coulthard sat broadside in the middle of the circuit, waiting to resume, his car's nose cone was shredded by the other Arrows as Mika Salo enacted a spin-turn in front of him.

That forced the McLaren driver into the pits at the end of the opening lap, from where he resumed 19th in the queue behind the safety car, which had been deployed while several cars were cleared from the track at the first and second corners.

Coulthard had started the weekend with high hopes after the disappointment of his British Grand Prix outing, when he spun out while running second in torrential rain. The sunny and hot conditions which prevailed during practice were much more to his taste, and he set the fastest time ahead of Giancarlo Fisichella's Benetton and Hakkinen, only to have a wet qualifying session and a series of unlucky breaks which consigned him to a distant place on the grid.

Hakkinen's world championship points advantage would have been even greater had Eddie Irvine's Ferrari F300 not developed mysterious "braking problems" in the closing stages of the race, allowing Schumacher to claim third place with only three of the race's 71 laps remaining.

That explanation from Ferrari's sporting director Jean Todt raised more than a passing grin from the opposition, particularly as Irvine seemed to be afflicted by these problems for only a handful of laps before Schumacher caught him; once the German was in third place Irvine resumed lapping competitively.

It is widely believed that Irvine's contract requires him to defer to Schumacher at all times but there is no way the Ferrari team can admit this in public without inviting the same disapproval from the sport's governing body that was directed at McLaren when Coulthard waved Hakkinen past to win the first race of the season in Melbourne.

The opening stages of the race saw a close-fought battle between Hakkinen and Schumacher. The Ferrari, running a lighter fuel load with the intention of stopping twice to Hakkinen's once, was clearly quicker than the McLaren ahead of it. However, the Finn kept his head and Schumacher eventually made the key driving error when he ran off the track on lap 17, also wrecking his nose section and ripping off an aerodynamic reflector.

He stopped for repairs before taking up the chase in 16th place, climbing back through to third with a little help from his team-mate.

● Three spectators were killed and six injured when a tyre ripped loose from a car competing in the IndyCar US 500 in Brooklyn and flew into the grandstand.

Sports Diary Shiv Sharma

England's women suffer a one-day whitewash

THERE were mixed fortunes for English cricket. While the men won the fourth Test at Trent Bridge against South Africa by eight wickets (*see page 32*), the women were beaten by Australia in the last of their one-day internationals by 114 runs at Lord's, losing the series by a crushing 5-0 margin.

Lisa Keightley, the Australian opener, became the first woman to score a century at the game's headquarters as the visitors amassed 256 for one wicket in their 50 overs. England's batting was then destroyed by the medium-fast bowler Cathryn Fitzpatrick, who returned figures of five for 47.

The defeat is a big blow for England, who now have to face a three-Test Ashes series starting next week, although they are the more experienced side over the five-day game. The Ashes, incidentally, were produced by burning a signed bat in a wok in the Memorial Garden near Lord's last week.

ROGER BLACK'S glittering athletics career appeared to be over after the British team captain was beaten into fourth place in the 400 metres at the AAA Championships in Birmingham. In one of the most exciting races in Britain in recent times, only two-tenths of a second separated the first four runners. Iwan Thomas won in 44.50sec, 0.12sec ahead of the favourite Mark Richardson. Both are guaranteed selection for the European Championships next month, but Black's hopes of competing in Budapest were dashed when selectors controversially also picked third-placed Solomon Wariso. Black, aged 32, who plans to retire at the end of the season, had set his heart on bowing out by regaining the title that launched his career in 1986.

BRAZIL'S football authorities sacked Mario Zagallo and his management team for failing to win the World Cup final against France. Zagallo, who coached the team to 107 victories, promised to reveal more about the Ronaldo saga after a new coach was appointed.

Meanwhile Cesare Maldini resigned as Italy's football coach after his team's disappointing performances in the World Cup. Maldini, who is expected to be replaced by Dino Zoff, had been in the job less than two years. France also saw a management change at the top. Roger Lemerre, the former coach of Lens, replaced Aimé Jacquet, who retired wreathed in honour after France's first World Cup victory.

JUAN Antonio Samaranch, president of the International Olympic Committee, caused a stir when he told Spain's El Mundo newspaper that he thought drugs should be banned from sport only if they represented a health risk and not because they enhanced athletes' performance.

DOUGLAS HALL and Freddy Shepherd, who were forced to resign as directors of Premiership club Newcastle United four months ago amid allegations concerning their private lives and their attitude to the club's players and supporters, are back on the board with $16.5 million "sweeteners" to buy new players and with apologies to the fans. But surveys carried out on Tyneside show that the vast majority of Newcastle supporters are unhappy about the pair's return.

MAL LOYE became the first county cricketer to pass 1,000 first-class runs this season after hitting 157 for Northamptonshire against Derbyshire. The 25-year-old shared a second-wicket stand of 296 with Rob Bailey, who scored 188. Northamptonshire went on to beat Derbyshire by an innings and 94 runs. The victory, however, kept them at the bottom end of the table.

BRISTOL, one of Rugby Union's powerhouses in the eighties but now languishing in the lower regions of the game, are broke. They have been placed in the hands of the receivers after it became evident that the club could no longer pay their debts or meet their financial commitments to the players. The club must find new backers before the new season starts next month if it is to survive in its present form.

JACQUES VILLENEUVE, the reigning world champion of Formula One motor racing, has turned his back on Williams. The 27-year-old Canadian is to drive for the new British American Racing team in a two-year deal understood to be worth $33 million. The team is headed by Craig Pollock, Villeneuve's manager for the past eight years, and the leading CART designer Adrian Reynard. "By signing Jacques we are putting enormous pressure on ourselves to perform," said Pollock.

BRAZILIAN tennis star Gustavo Kuerten beat the Slovakian Karol Kucera 4-6, 6-2, 6-4 in stifling heat to claim the Mercedes Cup in Stuttgart. It was his first title since he won the French Open in 1997. The 21-year-old pocketed the $160,000 prize money, but gave the bonus Mercedes limousine to his coach Larry Passos.



Russian gymnast Alina Kabayeva appears to lose her head while taking gold at the Goodwill Games at Madison Square Gardens in New York PHOTOGRAPH: JOHN LACONO

Cycling Tour de France

French pride punctured

John Duncan and Jon Henley in Paris

FRANCE, riding the crest of a wave of national unity after its triumph in football's World Cup, has been plummeting towards a more normal state of sporting disillusionment in the wake of a scandal that has engulfed the nation's real sporting passion — the Tour de France cycle race.

Friday last week was typical of this year's scandal-ridden Tour. One rider admitted taking illegal drugs; one team looked on the verge of expulsion after substances were found in its hotel; another team's doctor was confronted by a French TV crew after they rummaged through a dustbin and found phials and drug boxes; six riders were being questioned in Lyon; two team officials were interrogated by police in Pamiers; and three were on their way back from police hospitality in Lille.

"Instead of competing in the Tour de France they have ended up competing in the Tour of police stations," said a lawyer for one of the cyclists.

The response of the competitors was typically French: they went on strike for two hours. "Since sport has now become secondary and we're treated like cattle, we have decided not to race," said the French champion, Laurent Jalabert. "If nobody's interested in the race, then we'll go home and you go on without us."

The scandal started when the Festina team, which included the leading French rider Richard Virenque, were expelled after a team car was found to be carrying illegal performance-enhancing substances. The suspicion was that Festina were not the only team with a drugs culture, and so it has proved.

William Fotheringham writes from Grenoble: Members of the Festina cycling team followed their confessions to French police that they had used the banned blood-boosting hormone erythropoietin by explaining why — and they implied many other cyclists may be using the drug.

"Maybe the Union Cycliste Internationale should suspend more than 100 riders after the Tour," said the Swiss Armin Meier, who admitted on television earlier that he had used the drug for two years. "I wouldn't be surprised if this started an avalanche. I don't believe there should be a general amnesty."

His team-mate Laurent Dufaux expressed his hope that their confessions to a French police inquiry into the supply of drugs within the team officially ranked No 1 in world cycling, would clean up the sport. "It would be a shame to put the lid back on, because this is still a custom practised in the field now."

Alex Zülle, runner-up in the Tour de France in 1995, explained why he had used erythropoietin. "I had good results without doping, but pressure from the sponsors forced me to jump the gun. It was a personal decision, but pressure forced me to take the step."